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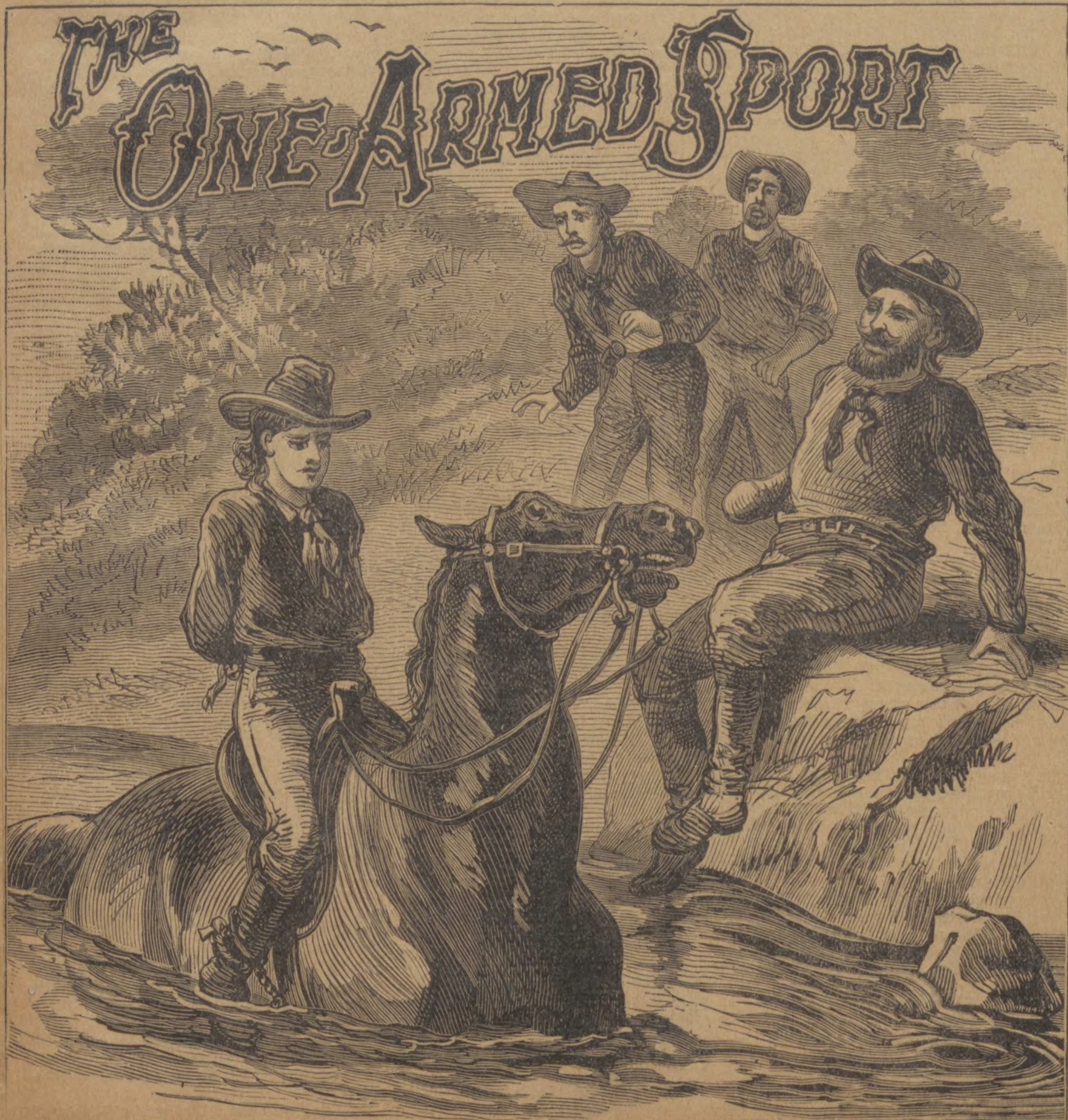
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"GOOD-BY, BOY," CRIED THE ONE-ARMED SPORT. "YOU AND THE WHIRLPOGL KIN HAVE IT LICKETY SPLIT."

The One-Armed Sport:

OR,

COLORADO CLAUDE'S CLAIM.

BY T. C. HARBAUGH.

CHAPTER I.

A YOUNG LIFE IN PERIL.

"I'd like ter see the kid. Dash my buttons if I wouldn't like ter catch him just once! They say he has the audacity ter put in a claim ter the mine, an' it's worth his while ter drop 'round an' tend ter it."

"You wouldn't hurt the boy, Jerry?"

"Me?" and the man half rose from the stool at the table and looked like an enraged Comanche.

"Why, he's not past sixteen, and the best-looking boy in these parts!" urged the other.

"I'll spile his beauty! I'll show him that he can't run the roost in this land. Look hyar! What are we hyar for? Do you think I've founded Gold City ter be done for by a boy? Jumpin' Jerry, Cap'n Kidd o' the Hills, isn't made that way—not much!"

"I don't say that," answered the man who listened to the burly one-handed mine magnate and sport. "I don't take the boy's part, and I don't b'lieve in claim jumping, as you know, Jerry, but even boys have rights, when they got the law with them."

"This one hasn't any rights if he's what they say he is."

"Yes, but people don't always tell the truth, captain."

"I know that. I've been ter all p'int's o' the compass, an' I know somethin' about human natur'; but thar ar' some people who b'lieve this world was made for them an' them alone."

There was no reply to this philosophic remark.

"Whar is the boy?" demanded Captain Kidd.

"Out in the hills somewhere, I suppose. He may not be in camp, here for a week."

"I'll lay for him. I'll show him, as true as my name's Jumpin' Jerry, that he can't stake out a claim just whar he pleases. Thar's law, the law o' might, in this land, an' as boss of Gold City I'm strong enough ter enforce it."

With this the speaker left the stool and strode from the resort.

In the middle of the street which ran through the mining camp he stopped and let the sunlight fall upon his stalwart figure.

Jumping Jerry, or Captain Kidd of the Hills, as he was also known, was a man of splendid physique—a veritable Hercules. His large face was covered with a full beard, and his mustache he could carry to his ears, a habit he had when not in good humor.

Clad in typical mining "togger," for he owned the Mountain Cat, one of the best mines in that part of Colorado, he looked the free and easy Westerner, and everybody knew or had heard of him.

"What war Jerry talking about?" asked a young man who came up to the big man's friend in the camp resort after Kidd's departure.

"He was making a few ugly remarks about Claude Kimball."

"Captain Jerry would better go easy. Colorado Claude has a host of friends

here; but he's fully able to take care of himself."

"I think so," was the answer. "He is a boy with a cool head on his shoulders, but, he can't afford to incur the ill will of Captain Kidd and his chums, that is certain."

"I know that. They're willing to do him a meanness if they think he is at all in their way, and that's why Claude can't afford to cross them without serious provocation."

"He won't do that, Loggs. I know him too well."

"And then he has a horse that can out-run the best that Captain Kidd owns, if it comes to the worst."

"Black Nell, you mean?"

"Yes, the mare he got from the Sioux last summer. She's as fleet as the wind, and Claude knows how to master her."

"The boy's all right, but there's that infernal claim business. It's unfortunate that Captain Kidd fetches it up just at this moment. He's 'spoiling for a muss,' as they say, and he understands that I'll be dragged into it."

"How?"

"Captain Kidd knows that I helped the boy to stake off the claim, that I advised him not a little; and, then, the girl—"

"I see. There's always a female in the case, eh?" and the speaker laughed.

"We will have to wait until Claude comes back to camp to learn just what game the mine-owner is up to."

"Yes. If I knew where to find him I'd go out and see that he was posted."

"Where was he last?"

"Down at the Blasted Buttes. But he's liable to be miles away now, and Captain Kidd will have to smother his ire and keep watch."

"So will we. Claude's alone here in Gold City, but he shall not be run out or bullied by Captain Kidd."

Meantime the man in the street had walked away and had entered a miner's cabin some distance from the public resort.

There he confronted a person as burly as himself, but somewhat younger, who was gormandizing from a very unclean table.

"Hello, Cap'n! Just in time ter taste the viands!" and he kicked a stool toward his visitor.

The other took the proffered seat, but did not partake.

"Not hungry, eh? I could eat a grindstone or gnaw the tips o' the Blasted Buttes."

"I've just dined," said Jumping Jerry. "Tharfore, I don't feel cannibal-like just now. I say, Jericho!"

Jericho Joe looked over his bone and stopped gnawing.

"What's up, cap'n? You look solemn," he remarked.

"I'm mad, all through. When I think of the downright robbery that has been perpetrated, my blood gets hot. I want satisfaction, an' I'll have it or break things."

"Easier said than done, sometimes," was the big tough's reminder. "But who's been robbin' you, the boss ov Gold City?"

"Who? Why, that young claim-stealer—the boy, Claude Kimball, of course!" and the "boss" leaned back and looked at the other.

"You don't mean it—the boy prospector?"

"That's just who I do mean. You know whar he staked his claim?"

"Yes, I heard he had made a locate."

"Well, that's my land. He's over my lines."

Joe gave the other a questioning look, but returned to his bone without expressing an opinion.

"It's my land—over on my stake, I say. Didn't I lead you all hyar? Wasn't I the original discoverer of Gold City? Say, haven't I some rights that a kid should respect?"

"Sartainly, Jerry: but, you see the boy has staked off his claim in good legal shape, and—"

"Yes, but I'll show him! A boy has no more rights than a man, an' as no livin' man can jump my lines, I don't propose to allow this little interloper to interfere with my rights at all. I don't want him around. You hear? I'm on the war-path, Jericho; I've got my paint on."

"You will rout out the boy prospector and see that he gives up the claim—that it?"

"That's just it, an' it sha'n't end thar," asseverated Captain Kidd, bringing his one hand down upon the table with emphasis. "Just you wait, Joe! You're with me, o' course. Others ar', too, as they've got to be. We'll trap this kid from the East an' send him to Kingdom Come if he don't let up on his claim and git out of Gold City."

"Whar is he now? Haven't seen him for some time."

"Oh, I know whar I will find him right soon, an' that'll settle it, you bet!"

"Do you mean it—mean a dead-shut game?" and Jericho Joe looked sharply at his visitor.

"Don't I? You'll help me, Joe?"

"Anything for a little fun, seein' as I'm in yer crew."

"Then, finish yer dinner an' come over ter my shanty. I'll see Black Silas, an' arrange things fer quick work."

Captain Kidd quitted the cabin and left its occupant to finish his repast.

Later, three men, Jumping Jerry, Joe and the fellow called Black Silas, all well mounted, rode out of Gold City toward the west.

They seemed to be in no hurry, for their steeds jogged leisurely along over the trail.

"We'll likely strike the boy's trail in the neighborhood of the Blasted Buttes," observed Captain Kidd, "so no need to hurry."

"He likes the place when he isn't at camp," from the man on his right.

"Yes, when he isn't in camp, whar he won't be any more, if I have my way, an' I think I will," said with vicious emphasis.

The three continued on toward the west.

The country seemed to get a little wilder and the mountains came into better view.

The gold hills of Colorado grew more and more defined; the trail, ascending, became yet rougher and more tortuous, and at last Captain Kidd and his friends drew rein in the very heart of the hills.

They had gained the neighborhood of the Blasted Buttes, from which the view was magnificent, and all seemed to enjoy it, wild men as they were.

Far away, its waters flashing in the beams of the sinking sun, ran a river swiftly and with many a murmur.

It was miles away, but it could be plainly seen by the men on their steeds, and Captain Kidd's finger suddenly pointed it out.

"He's down thar, I'm sure of it, boys," said he. "He's partial ter Thunder Riv-

er, and—he's liable ter take a bath in it—ha! ha!"

The descent of the mountain began, and the three, after a long ride, drew rein at its foot.

Captain Kidd pointed toward a dark line which ran parallel with Thunder River, and turning to his companions with an ugly visage, cried:

"Forward! boys, to find the kid!"

Away went the three, but, in a little time all drew rein once more.

Jumping Jerry, leaning from his saddle, pointed at the ground.

"That's his trail, an' fresh," he exclaimed. "Look! We've found the youngster. Now, for him!"

CHAPTER II.

COLORADO CLAUDE'S TERRIBLE FATE.

The three steeds sprang forward, under tightened rein, and for some distance kept up a rapid gait until, at last, the one-handed leader signalled a halt.

"We'll ketch him in the timber," assumed the captain. "The boy is near—Hark! That's the young lark singin', as sure as I'm hyar!"

The clear notes of a song came to the three, and they listened with intent interest.

"He's marchin' right inter the trap. We'll just draw back an' get ready," directed the chief. "Don't let yer hosses whicker, boys, or the game's up."

They fell back some distance under cover and waited for the singer.

As yet he could not be seen, but all the time, as they could tell by the voice, he was coming nearer, and the ruffians waited like a trio of road assassins nearing their prey.

Presently the quarry came in sight.

"That's the kid, boys," hoarsely whispered the captain. "He's right in the trap!"

A boy, mounted on a coal black horse, lithe of limb and very beautiful, came into view.

Claude Kimball—Colorado Claude—the boy miner and scout, it was, and a splendid specimen of the young Westerner he assuredly was.

Athletic for his age, his figure was perfection itself.

He sat his black mare like a young Centaur, and his face showed the glow of youth with the animation of a fearless spirit.

Clad in a dark shirt and buckskin pantaloons, and wearing a wide-brimmed hat, which let his brown locks fall over his shoulders, he was the impersonation of the frontier hero, and even his enemies, who watched him, admired him as he came forward—to doom!

Claude stopped singing as he entered the deeper timber and then he threw a sharp look around, to discover—

Captain Kidd and his partners in iniquity!

The youth smiled at sight of the three, and continued to approach them, suspecting nothing wrong, for were they not all from Gold City, and had he not hobbnobbed with them many a time?

As he came near he reined in the black and touched his hat to Captain Kidd.

"Which way, Claude?"

"I had thought of riding over the mountain," was the reply.

"Not to-night, I hope."

"Why not? It's not so much of a trick when I have Nelly here," and he smoothed the neck of his pretty mare.

"Of course," put in Jericho Joe, "of

course, it's not so much of a trick, but you might as well postpone the journey."

The boy looked a little surprised, but was not on his guard.

At once Captain Kidd and his followers brought their horses alongside the boy miner.

Then, the truth flashing through Claude's mind, his hand flew to the weapon at his hip, but the fingers of Silas closed about his wrist.

The lad darted a quick look at Jumping Jerry.

"What means this?" he demanded.

Captain Kidd smiled sardonically.

"You'll find out in a few minutes," he answered. "It means that we don't intend ter be pestered by you any longer."

"Pestered by me? What have I done? Oh, yes! Is it about my claim?"

"About your claim on my land—yes!" snarled the one-armed ruffian.

"On your land? Not much it, isn't Captain Kidd! The land where I staked my claim belongs to me!"

The dark eyes of the boy flashed their anger, but the three men laughed derisively.

"You must give up your claim," said Captain Kidd.

"My claim to the land you dispute?"

"The land I own!"

"It is mine, rightfully obtained, and I will not yield my rights."

"You'll fight for 'em, eh?"

"I will."

"And you'll keep 'em if you win?"

"I certainly will do that! To the victor belongs the spoils."

"That's pretty good. I used to hear the politicians say that in old campaign times. Well, my young gopher, you'll not git ter fight for yer claim. You're in my hands now."

Colorado Claude, now seized by Black Silas and Joe, was held like one in a vise.

"Tie his hands behind his back," ordered Captain Kidd.

The boy, realizing that resistance was useless, contented himself with a look of scorn at the leader of the band.

In a few minutes Claude Kimball was fastened to the black horse by a rope which passed around his legs and through the saddle rings, while his hands were secured at his back.

The tying was done by Joe, who drew the cords tightly; but, though the ropes seemed to cut through skin and flesh, the victim did not whimper.

Captain Kidd seemed to enjoy all this hugely, and then the forward movement was ordered.

Joe and Silas drew their revolvers, and while the former walked at Black Nelly's head with his weapon in his right hand, Silas and Captain Kidd, mounted, took positions on each side of the mare.

In this manner the march was toward the bank of the river, where a halt was made.

The boy miner, still undaunted, could but wonder what plans the three had formed—what was their game.

Of course the river had something to do with their plans; but just what he could not conjecture.

"You have given up your claim, eh?" asked Captain Kidd.

"I will not."

"Then into the river you go, to be sucked into the whirlpool just round the bend down thar," and the human brute pointed down the river, grinning exultantly as he did so.

Claude knew what the whirlpool was well enough. He had seen it a thousand

times with its restless vortex, into which more than one brave white man and scores of Indians had been remorselessly drawn, and the thought of it could but make the strongest heart quail and shudder.

It was just around an abrupt bend in the stream, and the roar of the whirlpool was plainly audible.

"Give him to the river," cried Captain Kidd. "That's the way to wipe out a jumper!"

Joe and Silas, seizing Black Nelly by the rein, led her to the river's brink.

The mare drew back and turned her head as if to look at her young master, but Jericho Joe struck her with his open hand, and she sprang forward.

Then the two men fell back, and the One-Armed Sport laughed in his supreme pleasure.

"Good-by, boy," he cried. "You've got a strong animal thar, an' you an' the whirlpool can have it out between yer! It won't take yer long ter reach the spot, an' the—Wal, I won't anticerpate, as they say in novels. Good-by, yonker! I'll keep the claim while you goes—nobody knows whar!"

Black Nelly, with the rushing water around her limbs, had halted in the stream, and was trying to stem it, an impossibility.

She would have crossed the river, but the water's force turned her head down stream, and Colorado Claude, bound in the saddle, could not guide her.

"We'll settle accounts some other time, Captain Kidd," shouted the brave youth at his persecutor on the bank.

"You don't say!" drawled the land pirate. "When you want ter settle up just send Captain Kidd word, will yer?"

"No! I'll come in person!"

"Better still," roared the ruffian. "You kin come at any time, an' you needn't send in yer kerd. Don't stand on ceremony, boy! You'll find me at Gold City."

"We'll meet. Never fear!" came from the rushing waters. "You will find Claude Kimball ready to meet you—"

"Thar you go!" shouted Captain Kidd. "Good luck to yer!"

The water was forcing the black mare resistlessly down stream.

Claude heard the bolsterous laugh of the brutes on the shore, but with eyes fastened on the waters ahead, he awaited his doom.

"Won't yer give in, boy?" called out Captain Kidd. "We'll git you out yet if you'll agree to turn yer claim over ter me."

"Never!"

The word came back like a shot of defiance.

Captain Kidd sprang up and shook his clenched fist at the vanishing victim of his diabolical crime.

"Then inter the whirlpool you go!" he cried. "Dead boys tell no tales, remember!"

Claude heard all this above the water's roar, as they neared the vortex.

"Didn't everything jibe grandly, boys?" cried Captain Kidd, as he fairly danced on the banks of Thunder River. "Never had any one play inter my hands as easy as this kid. I swow, I didn't expect such an easy victory, but it's all O. K., an' we've done for him."

"Look! cap'n, look!" exclaimed Jericho Joe. "Take a last look at the kid."

Captain Kidd looked down the river.

Claude had nearly reached the fatal bend and in another moment he and Black Nelly would disappear.

The big villain held his breath for a moment.

"Thar he goes!" he cried. "It's good-by forever, an' the land's mine."

Silas and Joe did not speak, for they saw the black mare plunge as she turned the bend in the river, as if she had put forth a desperate effort to escape.

"Hurrah for Captain Kidd!" vociferated the brute in buckskin. "No man or boy gets the best o' him. He's monarch o' all he surveys an' his rights no man lives long ter dispute."

At this moment there came from around the bend the shrill cry of an animal in danger.

"Come! let's see the end," and the head ruffian lunged forward.

All three ran down the bank until they could see the vortex.

It was leaping, dashing, boiling in its madness, but—neither Claude nor Black Nelly was in sight!

CHAPTER III.

ROBBING THE ROBBER.

Jumping Jerry, the boss miner of Gold City, was a well-known character in the West.

Like many other men of his calling, he did not have a very good name behind him, but that did not prevent him from becoming a man of note among the gold hills.

As we have heard him say, he was the founder of Gold City. He had led the present inhabitants, or the greater part of them, to the place and they had established there the camp with its motley population and diverse interests.

Gold City had no real "boss," like other camps, but it had several men who were leaders. Needless to say, Captain Kidd of the Hills was one of these.

The Mountain Cat, the best mine in the region, belonged to this man, and he would share his good fortune with none.

He owned the entire mine, worked it with men entirely under his control, and took from its veins gold galore.

He had grown rich; his fame and fortune had been talked about in other places and had even crossed the country.

It was early in the morning, before daybreak, when the trio who had dealt with Claude rode back to Gold City.

At the edge of the camp they halted for consultation, then rode quietly down the main street to their several shanties.

They had returned so quietly that the camp was not disturbed, and no one seemed to be the wiser for their absence.

Day broke over the camp, and one of the first out on the street was Jumping Jerry.

The morning was clear and cool, and the chief plotter strode on until he reached the last shanty on the street. To this he proceeded and opened the door without knocking.

"Silas!" he called, and a man sprang from a couch.

"Well, cap'n, what is it?"

"I thought I'd drop in. You know what we talked about the last thing this mornin'?"

"Yes, cap'n, I remembers."

"Well, you want ter do yer duty now."

"I will. When shall I strike?"

"To-day. The sooner the better. You know where the boy's things are?"

"I think I can find them. He generally left his traps with Calloway Tom."

"If that's the case, it's dead easy. Tom's not in camp; so go at once. I'll wait for you here."

Black Silas was "on the go" immediately.

Slipping from his own shanty, in a few moments he pushed open the door of another cabin but a short distance away and entered it.

It was the bunking-place of Claude when he was in Gold City.

Now it was not tenanted, and Black Silas—so named on account of his dark face—moved like a robber about the little room.

His keen eyes scanned everything and his hands slipped into all little nooks and stowage places.

At last he found, in a rude cupboard, well up on the wall, a package of papers, which he clutched with eagerness.

"Just the things the cap'n wants!" said the prowler aloud, to himself.

"They are the claim papers and the diagram!" he exclaimed, a moment later. Now the cap'n's all O. K.!" and Black Silas turned to depart, when the door was opened in his face.

The camp tough recoiled from the figure that confronted him.

"What's up, Silas?" asked the young girl in the doorway.

What could Black Silas say? He had been caught in the very act of theft, so must find some excuse for his presence there.

"Calloway Tom asked me to look after his house while he was away, and I've been doing it," added the girl.

"I see that everything is in shipshape order," stammered Silas, looking away. "You'd make a good housekeeper, Myrtle, for a nice young chap."

The girl flushed, but did not answer.

"What's that in your bosom, Silas?"

The thief was startled, and betrayed his confusion.

"I see the end of it sticking out," continued the girl. "You've taken the papers, haven't you?"

"What papers?"

"Those that belong to Claude—that were placed for safe-keeping up in the cupboard there."

"I'm no thief, I'd let you know," blurted Silas. "I don't rob people, especially boys."

"Then, what brought you to Calloway Tom's shanty this early in the day?"

"I—I had business with him."

"You know, as does every other man in Gold City, that Tom's not at home. He went off two weeks ago and publicly declared his intentions for days before he started. Come, Silas. You will have to get up a better story than that. It won't do. What are you here for?"

The man looked viciously at Myrtle, and started toward her. His eyes betrayed his rage.

"Don't you cross me!" he warned. "You're but a girl, but you must not cross a chap like me. It is none of your business what brought me here."

"But the papers?" persisted Myrtle, perfectly cool. "You've taken them from the cupboard where they were kept. See, the cupboard door is open."

"What if I have taken them or anything else? It is nobody's business but my own."

"I want those papers," said Myrtle, not at all disturbed by the ruffian's insolence. "You have them there in your shirt bosom. You know what they are and so do I. They are Claude Kimball's claim papers."

Black Silas frowned and put his hand upon the roll.

"Get 'em," he said, derisively.

"You won't deliver them up?"

"Not to you, my miss."

"Oh, won't you?" and a revolver

leaped into sight, drawn from the jacket pocket.

The camp tough recoiled. He very well understood that that meant business.

"Come!" commanded the girl over the leveled weapon. "You haven't the least right to those documents, and you know it, Black Silas. You came here for the express purpose of robbing Claude Kimball, but, Silas, you have to stand and deliver. I've got you lined for a dead sure shot!"

The belle of Gold City stood erect as an Indian near the door, with her back to it, and the six-shooter leveled at the tough's head.

"We'll make you pay for this!" growled the six-foot emissary of the mine magnate.

"That's all right. I'm willing to take the consequences. Hand me the documents, or it's shoot!" and the eye and attitude of the heroic girl were dangerously menacing.

"What'll you do with them?"

"See that they are restored to their owner, of course."

No wonder Black Silas laughed at this, for, fresh in his mind was the event on the banks of Thunder River. He had seen Colorado Claude and his black beauty vanish on the edge of the death vortex, and the idea of Myrtle restoring the papers to their owner was enough to excite his risibilities.

Myrtle's face did not relax. On the contrary she seemed more determined.

"I'll count three," she warned.

Silas did not move.

"One—"

Black Silas saw that she was in dead earnest—perfectly well apprehended his own peril, and, not waiting for "two" to be called, he drew the roll of papers from his shirt.

"Take 'em!" he grated, throwing the documents at Myrtle's feet. "We'll see that they don't do you any good."

The beauty of Gold City placed her foot upon the roll.

"You can go now," was all she said.

As she spoke she stepped aside, moving the papers with her, and left the way to the door clear.

Silas did not wait on the order of his going.

"Ta, ta, my daisy!" he said. "This is Gold City, and you'll discover that you can't keep the stakes you think you've won. You are a little boss here, with that pistol, but I'll see you later, miss!"

With this he left the shanty, in very ugly mood, of course.

"What will the cap'n say?" was the question then with him.

Silas burst in upon Captain Kidd.

"Got the papers, eh?" cried Jumping Jerry, with outstretched hand.

"No, curse it, I haven't! I had 'em, but she made me drop the hull kit at the point o' her gun, Myrtle did."

Jumping Jerry uttered a characteristic execration.

CHAPTER IV.

ONE-ARM AND HIS RED ALLY.

The One-Armed Sport and miner glared at his minion.

"Myrtle? You don't mean ter tell me that you left the girl holdin' the fort?"

"I do, by my life! I just had ter," blurted the irate and disgusted Silas. "She had me kivered, an' it was a ticklish situation. She had the dead

drop on me an'—an' I had ter give in or take a dose o' lead.

"Whar did you leave her?"

"At Tom's shanty, in course. She's thar, keepin' house."

"With the papers in her possession?"

"Yes, she's got 'em. She said she intended to restore 'em ter Claude."

"Restore them to nothing!" snarled the captain. "She nor anybody won't even find the carkiss; but with them same documents she might give us trouble and jump my lines."

"That's what I thought. The little huzzy'll fight; you bet!"

The one-armed man thought a little while.

"She'll take 'em to her own cabin, of course," he decided, "and it will be the easiest thing in the world ter ketch her nappin'. She's but a gal," contemptuously.

"A she catamount, she is!" muttered the discomfited emissary. "She's on the fight; so you won't ketch her so easy."

A few minutes later Captain Kidd was out in the gold camp, seemingly perfectly at ease, but he watched a certain cabin with an eagle eye.

By-and-by he saddled his horse and mounted.

The sun was creeping lazily over the tips of the eastern hills when the captain turned his face toward them, but once out of the camp, he faced in another direction and pushed on as if his was an important mission.

He did not draw rein again until he had crossed the first range and was descending into a beautiful flower-carpeted valley.

The sun was well up now, and One-Arm's horse was pretty well blown.

Once or twice he lifted his hand to his eyes and shaded them as he looked ahead.

But, he evidently saw nothing that attracted him, for he continued to ride on for miles.

Suddenly he drew rein and rose in his stirrups.

The way was open for some distance and his gaze swept the land before him.

He had caught sight of a horseman approaching, and he watched the blended figures with a good deal of interest.

Nearer and nearer came the objects, and at last the captain gave utterance to his delight.

"It just suits me. Nothin' could have done it better, an' I wouldn't have chosen a better place than this in which ter meet the chief. Yellow Feather is the feather for me!"

On, on came the mounted man, and presently he revealed himself.

He was an Indian—a stalwart in size. The yellow feather which formed the only ornament of his head-dress had given him the name he bore; it was the signet of his chiefship.

Signals of friendship were exchanged between the One-Armed Sport and the chief, and when they met they shook hands like comrades.

"I was just comin' down to yer camp," announced the white man.

"Yellow Feather save Cap'n Kidd that trouble. Him here."

"Of course. How goes it?"

The Indian smiled as he nodded.

"All right, eh? That's good."

"How—how with white brother?"

"Not so well. I'm in a bit o' trouble, Yellow Feather."

"Yellow Feather sorry," was the answer. "Cap'n Kidd can talk; red brother will help if he can."

"I know that. We're brothers, eh, chief?"

The Indian extended his red hand again, and the other shook it with energy.

"What matter?" asked the redskin.

"In the first place, I want ter punish a little gal who has crossed my path. You've seen her, Yellow Feather."

"The Camp Flower?"

"Yes, Myrtle. She's done me a scurvy trick, an' I want you to help me tackle her."

"Yellow Feather will serve white brother."

"You know where she lives?"

The Indian nodded.

"You know how to reach the cabin after dark, without noise, and you know how to make your horse carry double?"

The eyes of the chief sparkled apparently with eager viciousness.

"Well, I want the red eagle to swoop down on the dove. I want the girl carried off—I don't care where. Only I want to let her know that she can't cross my path without getting the worst of it."

"Cap'n Kidd shall have his revenge," assured the Indian.

"That's it! I want revenge!"

"He no care what becomes of Camp Flower?"

"No; but I wouldn't like ter see her lose her life or to be harmed."

Yellow Feather held out his right hand and grinned.

"Yellow Feather no hurt her; no, no!" he cried, smiling again. "Just show her, for Cap'n Kidd, that she can't have her way."

"That's it, exactly. Teach her that, Yellow Feather. I leave the way to do so to you."

The pair rode off together, their horses nearly touching each other. They evidently had been comrades before.

Their course led toward the right bank of Thunder River, and in a short time they came within sound of the waters.

All at once, on a certain spot where the ground was barren of grass, Yellow Feather reined in his steed and pointed downward.

"Look," he said. "Boy rides here!"

There were hoofprints in the ground, at which the white man stared in silence.

"Boy rides about a good deal," continued Yellow Feather. "Trail down there fresh."

The captain looked questioningly at the redskin.

"Passed here this morning," added the chief.

"I guess not, chief. I know he didn't."

Yellow Feather did not like this denial. He dropped to the ground and examined the hoofprints very closely.

"Yellow Feather right, boy pass here since daybreak," he reiterated.

"I'll show you that you are wrong. Come!"

Yellow Feather vaulted into the saddle again, and the captain led the way from the spot.

Not a word was spoken until the One-Armed Sport halted on a hill, from which could be seen the whirlpool in Thunder River; then the captain pointed toward it, in triumph.

"Yellow Feather sees the death hole," remarked the chief.

"Has any one ever escaped when once in its clutches?"

"No; it's clutch means death!"

"Did any one drawn into the vortex ever ride out of it?"

The redskin shook his head.

"Then, that settles it. The hoofprints

back yonder were not made by the boy's black horse."

"Horse in the whirl?" asked the Indian.

"Both the boy and the black steed were in the fatal circle."

Yellow Feather for a moment looked first into Captain Kidd's face and then at the far-away whirlpool.

His dark face was a study.

Captain Kidd uttered a chuckle of delight as he watched the countenance of the man at his side.

"When?"

"Last night, 'bout sundown."

"Who saw them?"

"I for one."

"Boy and horse both into the whirlpool?"

"Both. The boy was helpless—was hand-bound; couldn't have guided the horse from the stream. You'll have to knock under; boy's horse didn't make the tracks."

The Indian touched his steed with his heels, and rode toward the whirlpool, the other following, and both halted on the river bank, opposite the roaring whirlpool.

The bank at this spot was gently shelving, and in some places covered with fine sand or sediment to the depth of many inches.

The captain rode close to the water's edge, his eye scanning the ground under his horse's feet. Yellow Feather looked on with the face of a sphinx.

"He's yonder!" and the captain, with his lone hand, pointed at the whirlpool. "Thar ar' no hoofprints in the sand here, Yellow Feather. You saw only an old trail."

"Mebbe so, white brother! Why did boy miner ride down into the mad water fastened to his horse?"

"It was a case of necessity," was the reply. "The chap was cuttin' his eye teeth a little too fast ter suit us. In a few years he would be boss o' the camp, so you see, Yellow Feather, his trail had to be ended here."

The Indian was very thoughtful and surprised; his gaze wandered again to the fatal vortex, and he seemed to be contemplating the terrible death which had overtaken the boy victim of the one-arm's enmity.

"Now, remember the other job," suddenly reminded the captain. "I want you to play the red eagle, as I said, and swoop down upon the girl. She's going to be as troublesome as the boy. No one must stand in my way, Yellow Feather, young or old. Understand?"

The redskin evidently did understand, but did not reply, and the captain turned away.

Yellow Feather followed, but his visage had a strange look, and the further glance which he threw toward the boiling whirlpool expressed his wish and purpose to know more.

CHAPTER V.

A STARTLING NARRATIVE.

The next morning Gold City had a genuine sensation, and one which promised to last awhile.

Myrtle was gone!

The discovery was made by a miner who called at the girl's cabin very early and who was confronted by emptiness when he opened the door.

In a few moments the whole camp knew of the event, and Gold City was excited from limit to limit.

Men might have been seen on the

street, or in the various resorts; they were grouped on the little square, and their excited demeanor betokened the general feeling.

People discussed the mysterious vanishment, and concluded at last that she had for some unexplained reason decided to quietly change her quarters.

But not all came to this conclusion; there were some who looked at it in another light, who openly hinted of treachery, if not something worse, and by high noon things began to turn.

The One-Arm Sport kept his own counsels.

The owner of the Mountain Cat could hardly hide his glee as he listened to the general discussion of the girl's absence, and Black Silas and Jericho Joe winked at one another in a knowing manner.

"It war well done," declared the former to his confederate, while both were seated in Joe's shanty.

"Never left a trail behind. Never see'd anything so slick."

"Nor I. Thar's but one galoot capable of doin' that."

"Well?"

"The chief is the best stealer in this kentry, an' if the captain saw him, why, thar's whar she went."

The two worthies were content to wait for further revelations, which they knew would come in due time, but Black Silas remarked:

"I'll never forget how she looked at me over her six-shooter. Thar was 'shoot' in her eye, and her finger jest playin' with the trigger. The cap'n said he'd git even with her, an' he has, dead sure."

"If Yellow Feather did it, why, he won't let the bird escape. You remember how he watched her the last time he dropped inter camp?—how he praised her eyes and said he'd give his horse for a lock o' her hair?"

"It's all right, but she's got the dock-erments."

"Not if Yellow Feather bagged the game," was the answer. "You kin bet that they fell inter the cap'n hand."

"No doubt. But the red? No one saw him in camp, an' thar isn't the ghost of a trail ter be found, so everybody says."

"An' none ever will be. Count on Yellow Feather. Now, with things as they ar', the cap'n ought ter be in clover."

A few yards down the street, in the most pretentious cabin in Gold City, sat the man who was most interested in the strange disappearance.

The day was fast declining, and long shadows were falling across the thoroughfare which ran out of Gold City into the mountains.

The one-armed miner had tilted his chair against the wall and was smoking.

Some one outside tapped on the window, and in an instant he was there.

He opened the door and looked out.

"Cap'n," was called distinctly. "Is the coast clear?"

"Yes. Come in."

A human figure sprang to the door and in a jiffy was inside.

The One-Armed Sport shut the door and turned upon his visitor.

He could have lifted him with one hand, for he was dwarfish and thin, but with a pair of eyes that shone like carbuncles.

"Well, Pedro?" queried the captain.

"I haven't been hyar for six weeks, I b'lieve?"

"Well, what of it, Pedro?"

"Nothin'; only I'm a bit hungry."

Captain Kidd waved his hand toward a cupboard; the dwarf at once sidled over to it and began to help himself.

The man on the chair watched him a few minutes, then curtly demanded:

"Did you run across anything strange comin' in, Pedro?"

"Didn't I? Well, I should smile. I saw a most marvelous escape, day before yesterday. You never saw anything like it, cap'n."

"Where was it, Pedro?"

"At the whirlpool."

The One-Armed Sport started.

"Did some Indian get out of the clutches of the hole?" he queried.

"Indian? Not much! It was a white victim that got away this time. Never saw anything like it."

The one-armed miner was excited now.

"Tell me about it, Pedro," he commanded.

The little man dropped the bone he was picking, and leaned against the table.

"It was about sundown day before yesterday when I lay on the left bank of the river looking at the hissing and boiling cauldron. I was almost fascinated by the sight and the roar of the waters nearly deafened me."

"All at once, I saw a horse in the middle of the stream. It came round the bend where the pool is, and, to my astonishment, I saw that some one was in the saddle. You can imagine how I stared at the horrible sight and how my blood ran cold. The waters had the steed in their grip, the horse was helpless, and the boy—for boy the victim was—seemed helpless like one tied to the saddle."

"The rushing, whirling and sucking waters bore horse and rider on. Both were powerless to escape their doom. I could not lie still. All at once I saw another person I had not seen till then. Where he came from is still a mystery to me; but, he was there on the bank just opposite the pool—an Indian on a mettled bay."

"I saw the redskin uncoil a lasso and rush his horse toward the water's edge. Would he be in time to save the boy? I doubted it. The Indian was as cool as a cucumber, and his hands were as steady as if lassoing a steer."

"Out shot the lariat; it settled over the boy's head, tightened round his body near the saddle, and seemed to take the saddle in also. That done the redskin turned his horse's head from the water and the bay began to pull."

"The black horse seemed to realize what was wanted, and he struggled like a human being to assist his deliverer, and for some time I held my breath, for everything hinged on the strength of the lariat."

"The pool was fighting for its victims and the redskin was trying to rob it of them. Cap'n, it would have done you good to see the Indian win."

The mine-owner uttered a cry that quite startled Pedro.

"Heavens! he didn't win, did he?" he exclaimed.

"He did; but it was by the skin of his teeth. The bay had the best muscle. He pulled the boy and his black horse from the river!"

"What happened then?"

"The boy was relieved of the lariat, and he pointed toward the hills down the river and said something hurriedly to the red. In another moment both rode away, and I lost them in the thick woods beyond the pool."

"That accounts for it," said the One-Armed Sport barely above his breath.

Pedro was astonished.

"Had you heard of it, cap'n?" he asked.

"No; but the Indian won a great trick."

"I should say so. I knew the boy, and when he comes to Gold City again you will hear the story from his own lips."

"Perhaps. But the Indian? Who was he?"

"Oh, they're all alike to me. I think, however, I would know this one if I were to run across him. I would know him by a peculiar feather he wore."

"What sort o' feather?" queried Captain Kidd.

"It was a yellow one."

"No!"

"I took it for that color, anyhow; but, you see, cap'n, I wasn't very close, and it was getting dark. Whoever the red was he has nerve and skill, and he did Claude Kimball a service that time."

Pedro turned once more to the cupboard, while the face of Captain Kidd assumed somewhat of its usual placidity.

Saved? It could not be! Yet, why should Pedro's explicit narrative be untrue?

The dwarf was generally truthful, and had never been caught in a downright falsehood.

"You saw nothing more, Pedro?" asked the miner.

"I did not, for the moment the pair vanished, I made myself as scarce as possible."

"You haven't seen the boy since, I suppose?"

"No, nor the Indian. They disappeared together, but you know the boy belongs in Gold City."

"Claude does," replied Captain Kidd. "He makes his headquarters here when—"

Pedro held up his hand, and the speaker glanced toward the door.

The dwarf bounded to the door, flung it open quickly and thrust out his head.

"There he goes, cap'n," he exclaimed.

Captain Kidd, stepping to the entrance, did see a figure moving away, rapidly vanishing.

"It's queer, and yet I can't be mistaken," averred the dwarf.

"What? What is it?"

"That is the same Indian who saved Claude from the pool."

Captain Kidd, whipping out a revolver, bounded into the street.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SIX-SHOOTER'S MUZZLE.

In a short time the captain caught sight of the fitting form, and then changed his tactics.

Instead of rushing up, he glided to one side, and reached the plaza before the other came to it. The moment he saw who it was he uttered a cry.

It was Yellow Feather!

For a few moments the big man of the one arm seemed quite dumfounded.

He could not believe that it was the chief who had saved the boy from the whirlpool.

Yellow Feather, with whom he had bargained for the forcible abduction of Myrtle, had come back to Gold City for a purpose, and the white man thought he could guess its import.

The red had doubtless been frightened from the cabin by finding Pedro there, and the captain resolved to inquire into it.

Yellow Feather was moving toward

the confines of the camp when the One-Armed Sport rushed after him.

The redskin turned, and they stood once more face to face.

"Back again?" spoke the miner. "You've carried out your part o' the bargain, chief?"

"Yellow Feather does what he promises."

"Of course. And she is safe?"

The chief nodded.

"And the papers?"

The Indian's gaze dropped to his belt and rested there for a little while.

"You got them?" demanded Captain Kidd, as he put out his hand for the prize.

Yellow Feather drew back and looked at his white friend.

"She had them," the Captain insisted.

"Yellow Feather doesn't know."

"I told you to search the girl's shanty."

"Yellow Feather searched."

"And found nothing?"

The Indian shook his head.

"See hyar, redskin! I want those dockuments. They were in the shanty because she robbed Black Silas of them."

"My white brother knows where the nest is."

"And you know what became of the papers?"

"The white captain lies," flashed the red.

The one-arm's hand moved toward his hip, but that instant he was seized by the redskin and forced back into the deeper shadows of a shanty, close-by.

"Don't make Yellow Feather mad," hissed the red. "Don't trifle with him."

"But you said you would get the papers as well as relieve me of the troublesome girl," urged the captain.

"Yellow Feather forgets nothing."

"They say you pulled the young kid from Thunder River," cried the big miner.

At this the eyes of the savage flashed anew, and he darted the full light of them into the captain's face.

"Who says that?" he asked.

"I have just heard the story."

"Where is the liar?"

Why not take Yellow Feather back to his own shanty? Why not stand him face to face with Pedro and see which one would tell the truth?

Besides this, he would then have the treacherous redskin in his own hands, and if he really intended to betray him, why, he could put an end to him then and there.

It was a brilliant idea.

"I can show you the person who says that."

"Come then! Show me! Yellow Feather must see the man."

They went back toward the boss mine-owner's shanty, the Indian apparently eager for the meeting.

The owner of the Mountain Cat ushered his red companion into the cabin and shut the door after him.

"Where is the liar?" demanded the chief.

The miner looked around the room in vain; no Pedro was to be seen.

"He was here," declared the other.

"What call him?"

"It was Pedro."

"Yellow Feather don't know the white liar."

"He isn't altogether white. It was little Pedro, the yellow man—the man from Arizona."

"The serpent that stings in the grass," sneered the savage. "He must face Yellow Feather!"

Just then a robe hung across one cor-

ner of the room stirred, and the movement caught the Indian's eye.

In an instant Yellow Feather was on the spot and had jerked the robe aside.

He dragged the struggling Pedro into the light and crunched him down into a chair, as if he would break every bone in his body.

Captain Kidd did not interfere.

"Is this the liar?" demanded the red.

"That is the person who told me that you saved some one from the death pool."

"I named no one," whined Pedro, "and I never saw this Indian there."

"Look! he has a yellow feather," said the One-Armed Sport.

"I said I couldn't just see the color of the feather. It was getting dark, you know."

During all this time the gaze of Yellow Feather was riveted upon Pedro, who trembled in the chair, and the dwarf glanced at the door, as if measuring the distance to it.

"You deny it, then?" from Captain Kidd.

"I—I really don't know what I said."

"Fool! Open the door, Yellow Feather, and I'll throw the wretch into the street."

"No, white brother," and the hand of the savage interposed. "The liar is not out of Yellow Feather's hands yet. He said he saw me pull some one from Thunder River, did he?"

"He told me that in this room."

Pedro tried to rise, but was pushed back by the red hands.

"Does the captain believe it against Yellow Feather?"

"Candidly, I do not, chief."

"That's good. Shall I fling the liar against the wall?" and the fingers of Yellow Feather seemed to sink into Pedro's shoulders, until he nearly howled with pain.

"Let him go this time, chief," requested Captain Kidd.

Yellow Feather picked Pedro out of the chair and appeared to raise him above his head.

"Open door," he cried.

The captain did so, and as the portal swung back a human figure shot out of the Indian's hands and vanished.

"That's the way Yellow Feather serves liars!" cried the savage. "Now, white brother, do you believe him?"

"Of course I don't. You saved no one from the pool. I am sure of that."

"I have the girl safe."

"That's good. She was an easy capture, eh?"

"She didn't give me much trouble, and now she is where they cannot find her."

"I only wish you had found the papers which must have been in her cabin. They are very important papers in my eyes, chief."

"They may be there yet."

"I thought nothing ever escaped your eyes, but she may be an adept at hiding things, and has secreted the documents where we would never think of looking for them."

"House near by," suggested the chief.

"We might look."

Captain Kidd eagerly accepted the proposition, and, as night had come again, he proceeded to the shanty, with the Indian.

They lifted the latch carefully and entered Myrtle's recent home. The captain stopped in the dark and waited for the Indian to begin the search.

It would not do to strike a light, for the camp knew that Myrtle was not at home and suspicion might be the outcome of a match.

The cabin was searched by the pair moving round the walls feeling with their hands. They did not miss a single inch of space and after a good hunt they came back to the door unsatisfied.

"They're gone, Yellow Feather," avowed Captain Kidd.

"Mebbe so. What they read about?"

"They amount to a claim intended to rob me."

"To rob you, brother?" cried the Indian. "I thought no one quick enough to beat the captain."

"They can't beat me in the end; but just now if I had those papers they would make me feel better."

Yellow Feather clutched Captain Kidd's wrist and bent his face downward until the miner felt his hot breath.

"What will the captain give for the papers?" he asked in lowered tones.

"What, have you got 'em?"

"Yellow Feather did not say so. What will white brother give for the talking papers?"

"I'll give you two hundred dollars."

Yellow Feather laughed derisively.

"No more, captain?" he asked. "Then papers no good to you. Yellow Feather can sell them elsewhere."

"I'll raise it another hundred. That's all I can afford to give."

"They won't come back, then."

The One-Armed Sport was on his mettle now.

"I will fix this Indian," he said to himself. "I'll see if he beats me, black-mails a man like me, in Gold City. I wasn't born ter be hoodwinked by a red-skinned thief."

As Yellow Feather drew back the big mine-owner looked the savage sternly in the face.

"You can't sell me a single paper," he hissed. "You're a treacherous, red-skinned dog and this is to be your reward!"

His one hand closed on Yellow Feather's throat, and he hurled the surprised red man back, preparatory to drawing his revolver.

Just then the door opened and the moonlight shone into the place.

Captain Kidd nearly dropped the weapon. The boy miner faced him.

CHAPTER VII.

CLAUDE TAKES HIS OWN PART.

Colorado Claude had come back from the dead, as it were, and now he faced the one-handed wretch who had consigned him to that terrible place. The base ruffian showed his astonishment. Claude touched his hat in mock courtesy.

"Good night, Captain!" he saluted.

The answer was a look, at once savage and malignant, but the boy smiled.

"Don't show yer teeth. I'm master yet," he growled ferociously.

"Master, are you?" he echoed. "We will see," and the boy at once left the shanty.

"You scared, Cap'n?" from the chief.

"Scared! Bah! I'll show him. You must help me."

"Yellow Feather is ready. Boy own mine here, eh?"

"The Mountain Cat is the best mine in Colorado, or will be, and the boy sport has staked off a claim that interferes with my rights and lines. That's why I hate him, and want him silenced."

Yellow Feather grinned and nodded.

"My white brother play bluff, eh?"

"Yes, he knows all the tricks of the game."

A consultation followed between the pair in the darkness of Myrtle's cabin.

Claude Kimball, in another shanty not far from the spot, was telling his story

to two men, and his listeners were taking in every word but saying nothing.

"You must be cautious," advised one of the pair, at last. "We will stand by you, Claude. Captain Kidd will show soon his cards and then we can trick him. Won't you wait till morning, before moving against him?"

"Why wait? Let Gold City know of the outrage; now is the time to open the battle."

"Where will you do that?"

"At the Goldbug, where I can find the biggest crowd at this hour."

Claude started toward the door.

"You'll find many of the Captain's friends there."

"Then I'll see them."

The youth turned his steps toward one of the most prominent resorts in the camp town.

The room was ablaze with light and seemed to be filled with men. At Claude's appearance a group of miners asked him eagerly if he had heard of the disappearance of Myrtle.

"I know all about that," Claude answered. "I know she is missing, and I'm here to say that she didn't go away of her own accord. I'm here now, men, to tell you a story."

In an instant all sounds were hushed in the place and two men caught Claude and lifted him upon a table.

For a moment the fearless lad looked over the crowd and seemed to single out certain parties here and there; then he began the story of his usage at the hands of the three pards.

He mentioned no names, but related his terrible adventure—told it all as it had happened, and when he finished one might have heard the fall of a feather.

Then a cry broke out; the crowd demanded the names of the ruffians, and the rough fellows nearly overturned the table, in their eagerness.

"Give us the names o' the cowards an' we'll make crow meat o' 'em," cried the men. "Tell us who sent you inter ther' Death Rapids an' thar'll be some rope work right in Gold City!"

But Claude held back.

"You must tell us or we'll not b'lieve" cried a tall man in a blue shirt. "We want the names an' then we'll go ter work."

"I'll find them myself," said the boy. "I am Claude Kimball, and am able to take care of myself."

"But you needn't do that! We'll take keer o' the galoots for you. Long live Claude, the boy miner of Gold City!"

The shout was taken up until the rafters of the Goldbug seemed to shake.

The men surged around the table, nearly tipping it over, when, suddenly, the street door was thrown open and a pistol shot was heard.

The big lamp, suspended in the centre of the saloon, came rattling down, and the resort was wrapped in almost total darkness.

CHAPTER VIII.

PEDRO'S OATH.

The table upon which the boy miner was perched came down with a crash, for the men had fallen against it trying to avoid the falling lamp, and Claude was hurled to the floor.

Half a dozen rushed to the door, pistol in hand, but no one was to be seen, and the excited miners stood in front of the Goldbug, uttering maledictions loud and deep.

Some one struck a match in the room.

"Whar's ther boy?" was shouted.

He was not in the place.

Another lamp was lit, and the men

stood looking into each others' faces, amazed.

Claude's hat lay on the floor, but Claude himself was gone!

Cries of vengeance filled the air. Men rushed from the place pellmell, in their rage.

"The man who did the deed at the Death Pool was Captain Kidd," said a voice.

Instantly all sounds ceased.

Could it be true? The men of Gold City were amazed.

"Who says that?" demanded a big fellow, stepping forward from the crowd. "Let the man who accuses Captain Kidd stand forth and make his words good."

"Captain Kidd and his two pals, Black Silas and Jericho Joe, sent Claude to the Death Pool!" was repeated.

The men rushed forward and broke open the door of a cabin a few yards away, and dragged out a little man, whom they held up before them as they carried him back.

It was Pedro.

The dwarf had been found, and, as the accusation had come from the shanty, all were willing to swear that he was the person who had spoken the criminating words.

The crowd gathered around.

"Tell the truth," cried the men. "Tell it now. You said that Captain Kidd and his two pards did it. Is that true?"

"Speak out! We'll protect you, Pedro," was shouted.

"Set me down first," said the little man. "They shoot lamps down in Gold City and they can hit a livin' lamp like me with the same ease."

They set him on the ground.

"It is true," declared Pedro. "It was Captain Kidd, Black Silas an' Joe. I saw 'em do it!"

The little bunch of nerves and bones hesitated a moment, and then he told his story.

Some men doubted; others, clutching their revolvers, looked toward Captain Kidd's abode.

"Would you back that up with an oath, Pedro?" asked Tall Abner, the leader of the growing mob.

The dwarf held up his hand.

"That's enough," and the crowd drew back, leaving the little man standing alone in the moonlight.

He realized his peril, for, all at once, he bounded away, as if to get beyond the bullet of the marksman who had shot off the lamp-cord.

He stopped on the fringe of the little plaza which the Goldbug saloon faced, and then threw up his hands.

All heard a shot, and instinctively every face was turned to the spot.

They saw Pedro totter and pitch headlong to the ground.

Half a dozen ran and lifted him up.

The little head fell back, the eyes closed, the bosom heaved a moment; then was still.

"Whar's the villain?"

The crowd rushed toward the shanty from whence the shot seemed to have come, but only to find it empty.

They had heard no flying footsteps, had seen no assassin, and the result of the hunt was fruitless.

Ten minutes later the One-Armed Sport, in his own cabin, heard footsteps at the door.

He opened it to face fifty men.

"We want ter talk to you, captain," said Tall Abner. "You know what has happened?"

"I've been asleep," was the answer.

"I heard something like a shot, an' that wakened me. What has happened?"

The mob was astonished.

Was it true that this man had not heard of the thrilling events of the last hour?

"In the first place, they've accused you of sending Claude, the boy miner, into the rapids of Thunder River," ventured Tall Abner.

"Who says that?"

"Pedro said it, but the little man is dead."

"Dead? Pedro?"

"Yes. He war shot a few minutes ago."

"Who did that?"

"We don't know; but we will find out."

"That's right. Pedro was a friend of mine, and it seems unreasonable that he should accuse me of a thing like that."

"But he did. We heard him plainly. He says you had Black Silas and Jericho Joe at your heels."

"We deny that!"

The crowd turned at the words and saw the two men side by side before them.

Captain Kidd smiled upon his friends and the crowd made way for them to join him.

"We want the truth, that's all," continued Tall Abner. "We want to know for certain who sent the boy and his horse down the rive, and who killed Pedro."

"We'll help you to do that," assured Captain Kidd.

"We want to know, too, who is to blame for the disappearance of Myrtle, the flower of Gold City."

"We'll assist you in solving that mystery as well," was the quick response. "You hear Tall Abner, boys," addressing the pair at his side. "We must help these pards solve this mysteries which disgrace the camp."

At this a cheer went up for the One-Armed Sport.

Tall Abner and his friends were disconcerted; they did not know how to proceed with their mission.

"Bring Claude here and let us hear the story from his own lips," quietly ordered Captain Kidd.

"He's gone, too!"

"Not that, Abner. Gone where?"

"No one knows."

"Don't you think he is about the camp somewhere?"

"Can't say. Some one shot out the big chandelier an' when they lit another lamp the boy was gone."

"That's strange. Did he accuse us?"

"He told the story of his adventure in the rapids, but he named no one."

"I thought not. Claude is not the youth to wrongfully accuse a friend."

The captain folded his arms and Joe and Silas leaned against the cabin.

"When you fetch proof against us, why, you can punish," said the one-arm tough. "Until then we are innocent citizens of Gold City, entitled to all the rights and privileges of such."

Tall Abner said "Yes," and backed off, followed by the crowd.

Lying on his face in the moonlight some distance from the place where he had fallen, was Pedro, the dwarf; no one seemed to notice him.

All at once the supposed dead Pedro moved. His motions were slow and he wriggled through the moonlight toward a cabin. This reached, he forced the door open, and dragged himself across the sill.

In the darkness he found a couch in one corner of the place and crawled upon it.

There he groaned and moaned in his agony.

"I will have revenge," he muttered. "They think Pedro dead; but he lives; he lives to be avenged; I swear it by the powers above!"

Silence fell in the little shanty—silence, save the heavy and painful breathing of the little victim of the secret assassin.

CHAPTER IX.

CLAUDE'S TERRIBLE DISCOVERY.

"Hark, what was that?"

The speaker was on the outskirts of the camp.

Claude, the boy miner, it was. He stood among the shadows and looked toward the camp.

His escape from the crowd in the Gold-bug bordered on the remarkable.

In the darkness, when the surging of the crowd overtipped the table, Claude felt a hand at his wrist, and was jerked from the mob.

Almost before he could realize he was hustled from the place, through a rear door, and, in a moment, stood in the open air.

He stared into the face of the person at his side and drew back as if to resist the friendly, but firm grip.

"White boy no go back!" said his companion. "Him get into heap trouble! Him must go out o' camp."

Claude, though he resented this interference, was almost dragged away, and only halted when he reached the spot where he uttered the exclamation:

"Hark! What was that?"

The Indian stood beside him.

"Didn't you hear some one down there?"

The chief shook his head, but his figure was bent in a listening attitude; one of his hands at his right ear.

"Nothin', white boy," said he at last. "Yellow Feather sees and hears nothin' down yonder."

"Tell me, chief," and the boy miner gripped the Indian's naked arm. "Tell me if you had a hand in taking away Myrtle?"

Instantly the Sioux's face seemed to get a new expression.

"Does Claude think Yellow Feather a girl-thief?" he demanded. "Why should the chief steal the flower of Gold City?"

"Yes, why should he?" echoed the youth. "Captain Kidd is said to be your friend. You have been with him to-night."

"Yellow Feather has many friends among the whites. Him know 'em all."

"But you don't serve two masters, do you, chief?"

The redskin looked away.

"What would Claude do to the girl stealer?" he suddenly asked.

"Woe to the hand that harms Myrtle," was the quick threat. "I am that man's foe!"

Yellow Feather looked down into the upturned face and a smile was on his own.

"What if he should find Yellow Feather's hand in the play?"

"If that hand harmed her, woe to it!"

"Boy miner brave! Boy miner true to the flower of Gold City; but he must not play too cold a hand against Captain Kidd."

"You don't mean to take that demon's part. Yellow Feather?" exclaimed the lad. "You don't mean to tell me that I must not resist his game of robbery? Why, he wants to defraud me of my claim! It lies close to his mine. I'll acknowledge that, but it is fairly mine, and it will not be surrendered to the one-handed land pirate of Colorado."

Claude spoke with decision, and his

language seemed to please the stolid chief.

"White boy good grit—much good! Come!"

Yellow Feather started on, Claude's wrist again in his grip.

On—on they tramped, further up into the hills, until at last the redskin stopped, turning a questioning face upon Colorado Claude.

"What white boy give to see Myrtle?" was asked.

Claude looked amazed.

"I have nothing to offer, Yellow Feather," said he. "I can only promise. Show me Myrtle alive and safe and name your price when I open my bonanza down there."

The pleased Indian seemed to chuckle, and the two darted off again, but in a little while the chief, pausing, threw aside a lot of matted vines that overhung a perpendicular wall.

The mouth of a cavern of some kind was revealed.

"In, in!" cried Yellow Feather, pushing the boy forward. "White boy can give chief his gold by and by!"

Guided by the Sioux, the boy was taken down a winding passage in utter darkness, and at last halted.

Yellow Feather gave vent to a peculiar whistle and waited for a reply, but no answer followed.

"Was she left here?" asked Claude.

A match light flashed and he saw the Indian's face again. It wore a troubled expression.

"Gone," was all the chief said.

"Heavens! did you bring her here?" the boy demanded.

The redskin nodded, then suddenly ran along the wall, with the tiny light near the ground.

"See! Yellow Feather find the trail!" pointing to the rock floor.

"Let us follow it, then!"

The Indian turned once more, now bearing a real torch, which he had taken from a shelf upon the wall, where it evidently had been left for use.

For some time Yellow Feather pushed on, looking sharply at the ground over which he moved his torch, but at length he stopped, and leaned against the rocky wall, while an expression of horror came over the stolid face.

Handing the torch to Claude, he pointed at the moist floor of the passage.

The boy saw there the imprint of a dainty foot, going forward.

He was about to go on in that direction, but the Indian held him back.

"Death down there," warned the Sioux. "The chasm edge is yonder, white boy—the edge of the bank of the underground river."

Claude's face became pallid, but at once he dragged the Indian forward in his determination to know what was meant by the underground stream.

He could not hear the noise of water, yet he had heard of and seen subterranean rivers, which flowed far underground with a noiseless sweep, deeper and deeper into the Stygian gloom.

Yellow Feather let himself be led until the torch revealed the end of the path.

The bank of the river was below them, and the boy prospector threw the glare of the torch over the brink.

Far beneath him—it looked like it was a hundred feet—ran a river that sent up no sound as it carried its waters into the unknown.

Claude shuddered at the very thought that Myrtle had fallen into this awful tide, and for half a minute his heart seemed to stand still.

He saw that the foot-tracks which they had followed ended at the very edge of the bank.

He turned suddenly upon Yellow Feather, with the fury of a young lion.

The torch dropped at his feet and blazed there.

"You kidnapped her, chief," he cried.

Yellow Feather leaned against the wall and covered his face with his hands.

"You played that infamous part for Captain Kidd," continued the boy miner. "You stole Myrtle, my friend! You brought her here—to this horrible place, and left her to wander through darkness to the death she has met. Stand erect and receive the doom you deserve!"

Claude stepped back and a half-naked figure against the wall suddenly straightened there.

"Yellow Feather deserves it!" said the Sioux. "Let the white boy be his death!"

CHAPTER X.

FOUND.

It was the most trying moment in the life of Colorado Claude.

The torch flashed its light into the Indian's face and Claude's fingers gripped the deadly pistol which Yellow Feather seemingly did not fear.

"Why does not the white boy shoot?" cried the Indian. "Yellow Feather stands before him ready for the death-shot. He stole Myrtle from her cabin. He carried her to the cavern, but she is not here."

Once more Claude's gaze wandered to the brink and thence came slowly back to Yellow Feather.

"It was more Captain Kidd's work than yours," he said. "You are but his tool," and the boy lowered the revolver and kicked the torch away.

"We may find her; she may not have fallen from the bank into the silent river."

Yellow Feather snatched up the torch with a quick start.

Claude saw him wave it along the bank, while his eyes searched eagerly; but he looked up at last with the same blank expression of countenance of utter disappointment and despair.

Suddenly Yellow Feather appeared to bethink himself of something new, for he turned and darted away.

"Come, white boy!" he called, back, and the youth dashed after the Sioux.

He followed the torch as it flashed up one dark passage and down another—on, on, until at last the Indian stopped.

The river was flowing past his feet. They were nearly on the level of the tortuous stream, and its black waters washing the shore gave forth a strange, monotonous sound.

Yellow Feather pointed to a natural archway from which the waters came and his face assumed a questioning look.

"Could any one pass down the river to this place and live?" asked Claude.

Yellow Feather shook his head, but on the instant he threw one hand to his ear and leaned forward and listened.

"What is it?" asked the lad.

No reply, but the chief continued to listen.

"Come!" soon cried the Indian, bounding away.

Dashing along the bank of the river, he turned into another passage.

"Here, boy!"

The chief stopped and Claude came up. "She lives, but she is yonder," and Yellow Feather pointed forward.

Suddenly he put his ear against the wall and remained there in a bent position, like a statue.

"Yellow Feather hears the lost Flower of the Camp!" he said, a look of intense expectancy on his visage.

The boy miner heard a noise, seemingly from the other side of the wall, and he held his breath as he listened.

"How can we reach her?" he demanded.

"We try, boy."

Ten minutes later the two were in another part of the cavern. The Sioux stood on what appeared to be the brink of another precipice, an uncoiled lariat in his hand, and gazing searchingly over the cliff.

All was dark below, but quickly the redskin made the lariat fast to a projection and at once lowered himself over the wall.

Claude watched with keenest interest and tried to throw the light of the torch into the chasm below.

Down the Sioux went hand over hand, and quickly disappeared wholly from sight.

Soon there came a strain on the lariat, and the rope seemed to become taut as with a heavy burden.

Claude leaned over the brink and saw something beneath him.

He made out the head and shoulders of the Indian, but—what more? Surely the chief held something thrown across his broad shoulder!

Seconds seemed hours to him then, and at last the redskin and his burden reached the top.

"Myrtle!" cried Claude, as he fell back, white faced and horrified.

Yellow Feather clambered over the rim of the pit, the form of the girl now clasped tightly in his arms.

Yellow Feather laid his burden at the youth's feet and stepped back.

Yes, it was Myrtle, but Claude seemed to shrink from the now ghastly-looking object, once the beauty of Gold City.

"She lives!" said the Indian. "Yellow Feather reached her just in time. She must have fallen into the black river and been carried to the wild spot down there."

Myrtle uttered a moan. Instantly the boy was at her side.

"It is a dream," she said. "It must be, for you cannot be Colorado Claude."

Claude assured her that it was reality and not a spirit vision, and by degrees Myrtle came out of the illusion.

"Now for Gold City!" cried the boy, as he rose from Myrtle's side, but, the next moment, he uttered a cry.

Yellow Feather was gone!

"The Sioux has deserted us," he said. "We are alone in this labyrinth of death."

He ran down the passage with the torch, only to come back to Myrtle disappointed.

"It is true. Yellow Feather is really gone."

"But we will find the way out," reassured the girl. "I am sure we are not to perish here."

Signs in the passages showed them the prints of moccasins, and these they followed, and in a half hour's time both uttered a cry, for ahead shone the stars of the summer sky!

Fortune had indeed favored them; Claude and Myrtle stood underneath the starry vault, free!

The night deepened; the stars went down the trails of the sky; the wind blew, for dawn and the first birds of morning made music as Claude Kimball and Myrtle entered Gold City. The girl was conducted to her little home on the straggling street, where the boy miner said good-bye for the present.

As he turned into the street again a man opened a door and started at sight of him.

It was Black Silas!

The bearded tough caught sight of the boy and turned to speak to some one behind him, and ere the door closed Claude saw another figure in the same shanty.

"Birds of a feather," observed the boy. "They now know that I've come back. Both Silas and Joe have seen me and the captain won't be kept in ignorance."

Claude kept on to his own cabin, and entering it he shut the door behind him.

The little room had been disturbed since his last visit, he could guess by whom, and he looked around with flushed face.

Crossing the floor, he at once opened a well-concealed niche in one of the logs and reached his hand into it, but only to withdraw it empty!

"Myrtle was right. They've plundered me," was all he said.

The sun crept over the eastern hills, and the men of Gold City came out, one at a time, until all seemed congregated in the main thoroughfare.

Claude watched from the little window alongside the door of his shanty with compressed lips and determined visage.

The crisis in the boy miner's life had come, as he knew.

Presently a tall man, with a check shirt, and wearing a yellow belt, came toward the shanty.

"Granite Gid, the high sheriff of Gold City," murmured the boy.

Gid had many times proclaimed notices of outlawry and posted them on the front of the outlawed's shanties, but this time he had another duty to perform.

He came on until he stood in the street nearly opposite Claude's cabin.

"Now I'm in for it," thought the boy. "Granite Gid is going to perform some official function."

Sure enough, the tall sheriff raised his hands.

"HeaHr ye, hear ye, all consarned!" cried he. "This day Captain Kidd of Gold City takes possession of the following territory, which he rightfully claims as his own."

A slight pause followed; then Gid in the same loud tones described the land covered by the boy miner's claim.

"Who disputes this claim?" ended the sleuth.

The door of the cabin suddenly flew aside.

"I do!" and Claude Kimball stepped forth.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SECRET OF THE HAND.

Granite Gid looked at the boy amazedly.

"Tell Captain Kidd that I am here to defend that which is mine, and that I will defend it to the bitter end."

With this Claude retired into the cabin and the door was closed.

"I didn't know he war about," thought Gid as he walked back. "But, he's got the grit, an' now Captain Kidd must fight his own battles."

In less than ten minutes the whole camp knew that the boy had reappeared.

His disappearance had proven a mystery, but the pards of Gold City did not doubt the boy would explain all in good time.

The One-Armed Sport heard the news with apparent composure, from his two minions.

"The boy can't hold out with us," declared the Boss; "we can crush the little cuss like an egg shell."

"He's a cool duck, cap'n," ventured Joe. "You know that."

"Little his coolness will avail him now," was the answer. "I have put in my claim to the ground and Granite Gid has proclaimed it to the hull camp."

"Yes, and the boy said he disputed the claim."

"Pish! We'll wipe him out, that's all."

Ere long the cabin swarmed with his adherents—the toughs of Gold City, and all were ready to obey the orders of the one-armed Boss.

Meantime Claude, quitting his cabin, was talking to a group of men in front of the Goldbug, his face illumined with joy as he told of the unexpected rescue of Myrtle who soon came forth to receive cheers from the dark-shirted fellows.

"When is the case to be tried?" asked Tall Abner.

"Granite Gid says right away."

"You have your papers, boy?"

"Myrtle has hid them and knows where they are."

"That will settle it."

"She was fortunate enough to hide them from all eyes after she made Black Silas give them up."

"Captain Kidd will play a bold hand or else try to deal the cards secretly to suit himself."

"He'll find me ready for him," asserted Claude as he walked toward Myrtle's home.

Captain Kidd remained at home until late in the afternoon; then he ventured out.

It was noticed that he was dressed with scrupulous care, wearing a new suit of buckskin and a dark shirt that well fitted his burly figure, and of course was "well heeled," as usual.

One thing about the One-Armed Sport, which from the moment of his arrival on the spot where Gold City stood, had been a mystery, and this was the lost hand.

The arm apparently was missing from a point halfway between elbow and wrist, but no one had ever seen the stump.

He kept the end of the arm bundled up in a neat manner, and beyond this the men of Gold City knew nothing.

The fact that he never referred to the loss of hand and wrist sometimes puzzled the denizens of the gold camp, but they had never pushed any queries in that direction.

Captain Kidd, or Jumping Jerry—the latter name he seemed to like best—made his way to the Goldbug, which he entered in his usual cool manner.

The moment he did so his eye roved toward the farther end of the place and at once singled out a man who stood there.

This person already had attracted some attention from the men there congregated, and they were amused to see the embarrassment he seemed to feel as the Boss of Gold City.

"Hello!" cried the stranger as he stepped forward and held out his hand to the One-Armed Sport. The captain, not to be out-done, shook hands with him, but his gaze fell.

"How is it?" asked the other. "I'm glad to see you."

Captain Kidd laughed and passed a few remarks with the stranger, but in a short time the Boss quitted the resort.

Straight back to his own shanty he walked, his face anxious in expression.

"Curse it!" he muttered, as he threw himself into a chair at the round table. "That this man should come to Gold City just now is unfortunate. Who sent him? And what infernal fate directed me to the Goldbug just now?"

Just then the door opened to admit Jericho Joe.

"Who is he, cap'n?" asked his right bower. "I saw and heard it all. He knows about you, cap'n, for he smiled grimly and asked the boys when you lost yer hand."

"Did he do that, Joe? And what did they tell him?"

"Abner said it war off when he first knowed you, and the others chimed in with him."

"And the man? What did he say?"

"He just looked away, but I caught a grin at the corners of his mouth, but he was as silent as the grave."

"Whar is he now, Joe?"

"In the Goldbug yet."

"See hyar, Jericho. That man is against us."

"I'd bet my head on that same! But, I say, who is he, cap'n?"

"I'll tell you, Joe, for I don't see any need of keepin' the secret."

He came over to where Jericho Joe stood and touched the man's arm.

"That man is Pedro's brother!"

"What, brother of the dwarf?"

"Yes. You wouldn't think it, Joe, one so tall and well built, the other a midget. But, its true, and they are the strangest brothers you ever saw."

"What fetches him ter Gold City?"

"The little man's trail, I opine."

"Pedro has been missing, then?"

"For years. The big brother is sincerely attached to the little one. What has become of Pedro, Joe?"

"They say he crawled away in a mysterious manner, and since then he hasn't been seen."

"He may have died."

"Perhaps, for the person who pulled the trigger on Pedro never shoots for nothin'. But, I say, cap'n, what made that man look so closely at yer maimed arm?"

"I don't know that he did, Joe."

"He really did. He appeared suspicious, and he had before asked the pards when you lost it."

"This man is dangerous," and the voice dropped almost to a whisper. "When I say dangerous, Joe, I mean just that."

"Call him out. You're a dead shot, cap'n. And do it right away. If he is Pedro's brother and dangerous, he must be spoilin' for a muss, and you can make him fight."

The One-Armed Sport seemed to reflect.

"He's left handed," suggested Joe.

"And I am right handed."

"You?" and Jericho Joe stared at the bandaged arm.

With a grim smile Captain Kidd held out the maimed arm.

"I am right handed and that man knows it!" he averred.

"But you can't hold a weapon in yer right hand!"

"Oh, can't I?" and Captain Kidd, fumbling a moment at the stump, suddenly jerked away the covering.

Joe, with a sharp cry recoiled, as a red hand at the end of a deformed arm was held up before him.

"That's yer secret, cap'n," he said at last. "I never dreamed of it."

"Pedro's brother knows that I have a hand at the end of this arm," was the answer. "He knows much more than that, Joe. That man man must die!"

CHAPTER XII.

STRANGE EVENTS.

Jericho returned to his companion in their shanty, and the pair put their heads together.

By and by, emerging from the place, they walked over to Captain Kidd's cabin.

Pedro's brother, meantime, had asked about the dwarf, but the men of Gold City could not throw much light upon the little fellow's whereabouts.

Night had closed its curtains around the camp, when Colorado Claude in his abode was startled by a rap, and, opening the door, he faced the brother of Pedro.

The tall man entered and stood there, without speech, his eyes riveted upon the boy miner.

"Well, sir, what is it?" finally demanded Claude.

"Let me see your claim, boy," and he reached forth his hand.

Claude at once drew from his bosom the important papers and handed them without reserve to his unknown visitor.

Pedro's brother, drawing a stool up to the table, sat down; then he opened the documents and ran them over carefully, closely watched by the boy.

At last he put them down and looked up into the young claimant's face.

"They're good," said he, "If they were mine I'd call them good enough to fight for."

"That's just what I'm willing to do," asserted Claude. "I don't believe that Captain Kidd has the ghost of a claim on the ground I've staked out. It may approach his mine, but it does not get over upon him."

"It's the same old tactics. The man will never forget them."

"You know Captain Kidd, then?"

"Don't I?" with a smile. "I used to be fairly well acquainted with Jumping Jerry, as you call him here, or Captain Kidd," and he added, abruptly:

"You never saw the stump of the captain's right hand, boy?"

"Never, nor any one else. He keeps that arm well hidden, as if he dared not show up."

"You spoke truly then; he dare not! He would not take off the wrappings."

"You know it, then?"

"Yes, all about that arm. It is a fraud! There's a good hand at the end of that arm."

Claude's look betrayed his astonishment.

"I'm going to unwrap that hand!"

"Be careful!" warned the youth, "he's as dangerous as a rattler!"

"I've been warned before," was the reply. "In the morning, my young friend, Gold City will see the hand he has kept concealed so long."

"But why does he hide it?"

"I'll reveal the secret at the same time."

"I hope you will. Jumping Jerry is boss here, and —"

"Hark!" and Claude, springing up, sprang to the door, which he opened. Heavens! Look here!"

The boy pulled a bit of paper from the door and handed it to his visitor.

It was a piece of yellowish paper as large as two hands when put together, and Pedro's brother leaned forward in the light as he tried to decipher the scrawl thereon.

"It's for you, boy," he said.

"What does it say?"

"It warns you to quit Gold City, and is signed 'A Friend.'"

Claude, bursting into a laugh, took the paper.

"My friends would not send a warning in this manner," said he. "It is simply a play by my foes. My friends here will stand by me; they wouldn't seek to frighten me away."

"Give me the paper," and Pedro's brother took the scrawl from the boy miner's hands again.

Once more he read it carefully, dwelling on the shape of the letters, as it seemed; then he looked up with a smile.

"It's the old handwriting slightly disguised," said he. "I've seen it before."

"It is the captain's?"

"Surely," answered the man. "And he wrote it with the hidden hand. Your claim comes up in the morning, I am informed."

"Yes, so Granite Gid tells me."

"What will be done, then?"

"Gid will select a jury, and it will determine who has a right to the ground."

"And Gid won't select a jury against Captain Kidd?"

"Of course not!"

"I see. It's easier than looking through a stone wall," was the reply.

"The jury will decide that you are on Jumping Jerry's ground. Can I have your horse, boy?"

The question was so abrupt that the boy miner started, but he assented.

"Black Nelly is at your service," he said.

"I'll be back by daylight. My own horse threw a shoe coming down the mountain, and can't travel very well."

"Take Nelly, then."

Pedro's brother opened his dark shirt and took from it a package not larger than his hand.

"I'll commit this to your care," said he. "It contains something important. If I should not come back—you know that dangers lurk in the mountains—you will place this package and its contents before the jury."

He pushed the object across the table and rose.

"But I'll be back," said he. "This is a double game, and if I can prevent, boy, they shan't despoil you."

When he was again alone Claude picked up the warning and read:

"You're in the death coils, Claude. They are tightening, and if you remain the vultures will have a feast to-morrow. A Friend."

The boy threw the warning upon the table with a gesture of defiance, and for a few minutes walked the floor, his face strangely white.

All at once he left the cabin, and soon was at Myrtle's door.

It was opened to his knock, and he stood before the belle of Gold City.

"I saw a strange thing just now," cried Myrtle. "Black Nelly passed my house. Has some one stolen the mare?"

"No; I let him have her."

"I did not know the man, but he looked like a messenger from another world, so solemn and strange. Just below my cabin he stopped and looked back. I saw him hold in midair a long, naked knife, and as I listened breathless I heard him say that the day of doom had arrived. Who is that man, Claude?"

"As much a mystery to me as to you."

"Yet you intrusted Black Nelly to him?"

"I did. I hardly know why, but I let him have the mare, for he promised to return by daylight."

The girl looked incredulous.

"You've lost a good steed," said she.

"That man will never return."

"I have made a discovery that absolutely startles me," continued the girl. "Half an hour ago I thought I would look into Pedro's shanty. I approached

it carefully and found the door unhooked."

"It is seldom hooked, you know."

"Yes, but I thought it would be hooked to-night. You remember when Pedro was shot he suddenly vanished as if he had crawled off somewhere to die?"

"Yes."

"I thought he might have died in the cabin, and that is what directed my steps in that direction."

"Well?" eagerly queried Claude.

"I found the shanty deserted, but in the little table where Pedro ate I found a knife buried half way to the hilt. It must have taken a great deal of power to bury the blade thus. I approached still nearer, and I saw that some hand had chalked on the table the word Vengeance! and that the knife had been driven through the middle of the word."

"Then the yellow midget is alive!" cried Claude. "That is Pedro's work."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HUMAN VULTURES' SWOOP.

The boy miner went back to his little cabin to prepare for the testing events which he knew were near at hand.

He wondered if Myrtle's estimate of Pedro's mysterious brother was correct, and whether the man to whom he had intrusted Black Nelly would return in time to unmask the one-armed sport.

Placing under his pillow the package received from Pedro's brother, as well as the documents that substantiated his claims, he barred the cabin door, and in a few minutes was in the land of dreams.

How long he slept Claude did not know when he found himself sitting bolt upright on the couch, as if some strange noise had stirred him, then, in a moment more, in the darkness, a hand fell upon his shoulder, and he sprang out of bed, but only to be thrown against the wall and held there.

Cords went deftly round his body, pinioning his arms; then he was lifted from the floor.

Some one unbarred the door, and he was hustled from the shanty. Once outside other hands clutched him; he looked into two masked faces of stalwart men and was hurried away.

A thrill shot through his mind when he thought of the papers he had left under the pillows.

They were lost now!

The young claimant struggled in vain; he was powerless in the hands of the enemy, and in a few moments was thrown astride of a horse that stood behind the shanty, a pistol held close to his head compelling his silence.

A rope was passed around his legs and then under his steed's flanks, and he was fastened to the saddle.

That done, the masked pair mounted horses at his side, and five minutes sufficed to carry all three from Gold City to the mountain trail.

"How do you like it, eh?" asked the man on his left.

Claude looked at the gleaming eyes behind the mask, but kept silent.

"Do you think you'll win the play now?"

"This is infamous!"

"Of course it is, in your eyes," laughed his tormentor. "We don't expect to do anything that would please the claim jumper."

"Liar! I am no claim jumper!" was his irrepressible retort.

In a little while the trio entered a

gulch, the walls of which seemed to reach the clouds in their grandeur.

Here a halt was made, but soon the party moved on once more, and it was several miles further on up the gulch before the two men drew rein again.

"The river didn't hold you," then remarked one of the masks. "You got out of the Pool. Who saved you? Was it Yellow Feather?"

"Find out; I will not tell you?"

"If the red helped you, he will lose more than his head-dress."

"Yellow Feather can protect himself," from the boy miner, defiantly.

One of the men now stripped the bridle from the head of the steed the boy rode.

They now reinspected Claude's bonds, and one of the pair produced a revolver.

"Will you agree to remain away forever from Gold City and disturb no one there from now on?" he demanded, menacingly.

"No! Gold City is my home and there I stay!"

"Life is sweet. Life is worth living for. It is now or never with you, boy!" and as the ruffian spoke he took from his bosom the packet left in the boy's care by Pedro's brother, as well as the papers which proved his own claim.

"You recognize 'em, don't you?"

"Yes, thief, I do recognize them!"

"You will never see 'em again!" and with that he struck the prisoner's horse sharply with his open hand.

The horse snorted and dashed away.

Claude knew that a levelled revolver was behind him, and ducked his body the best he could.

At the same instant two revolvers blended their reports, and he felt a sharp sting like that made by an Indian arrow.

He tried to straighten in the saddle, but was unable to do so, and the pain instantly became keen.

"They've got me at last, the villains!" muttered the boy miner. "I am to perish here—to die like a wounded coyote."

He saw the stars dance in the heavens before his eyes as on he rushed; he saw them vanish suddenly; then he felt a strange darkness like the gloom of a haunted house swoop down over him.

Meantime the masked men rode back, keeping on their masks until they re-entered Gold City and rode to the stables, where they dismounted and unmasked.

Jericho Joe and Black Silas stood revealed.

The two men had simply done their master's bidding, and while they crept toward Captain Kidd's cabin the bridleless steed was carrying his doomed rider deeper and deeper into the heart of the hills.

Captain Kidd, still out of bed greeted his tools with—

"Well, did you send him adrift?"

"We hold all the trumps, Cap'n," answered Joe, throwing upon the table the spoils of the expedition. "The boy slept like a log, and Silas wiggled inter the shanty like a weasel. We had him when he opened his eyes, and now they're shut. Ha, ha!"

The captain picked up the package of papers and handled it with a look of triumph.

"This is what I've wanted. It is the packet she took from you, eh, Silas?"

Black Silas nodded.

"But, what is this?" asked the Boss, taking up the other object.

Both men shook their heads.

"You don't know, eh?"

"We don't, cap'n, because we haven't looked."

The One-Armed Sport scanned the package from all points.

It was about as large as his hand and as flat, and was tied with a faded scarlet cord.

"We found 'em both together," explained Jericho, "under his pillow."

"I know nothing of this," mused Captain Kidd, "but we'll soon see what it contains."

He drew his knife and cut the strings.

The two men leaned forward, curiosity in their dark faces.

"What is it, cap'n?" from Silas.

"I'll be hanged if I know," was the reply. "Why, here's a picture and a lock o' hair. And here's a ring and a dagger hilt. Strange things for a boy to have in his possession, out here in this wild country."

A piece of folded paper fell from Captain Kidd's hands, and Silas picked it up. It proved to be a printed proclamation, offering in large letters one thousand dollars reward for the head of an outlaw named Major Christmas.

As Silas read aloud the document, Captain Kidd snatched it from his grasp. His face had grown pallid, and holding the paper in his hands, he gazed at it like a man suddenly sentenced to the scaffold.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE STRANGE BROTHERS.

Pedro was at home again.

The dwarf was "on deck" and evidently, by his demeanor, was on the verge of a new excitement.

His yellowish hands looked talon-like in the rays of the dip that burned on the table, and the bandage about his head gave him an almost ferocious appearance.

He looked uneasily toward the door, and now and then shook his head as if he distrusted the pledge of some one whom he expected.

"I will go out now," he finally decided. "Why not give Gold City its greatest sensation to-night?"

Slipping from the cabin after blowing out the light, Pedro glided away and soon was staring in the window of Captain Kidd's abode.

"All there," he chuckled. "The three vultures are talking over some new iniquity and don't dream that death is at hand."

Captain Kidd had thrown upon the table the proclamation that had paled his cheeks, and Black Silas and Jericho Joe were looking at their leader in amaze. "Looks like one of the old proclamations we used to see in the South," resumed Pedro, recognizing the paper. "It's about the size of the sort Red Hazen used to tack up on the trees and the cabins in the San Pablo Valley. I wish I could read that one."

Suddenly the captain seized the paper and put it away in a little box beside the rude chimney.

"No matter who Major Christmas was, boys; we've got other work before us," Pedro heard the big ruffian say. "The boy's gone. The girl is back in the nest and the man called Pedro's brother is—"

Pedro gave vent to a low cry and dropped to the ground.

When he looked again the three men were on the eve of quitting the shanty.

"Gods!" said Pedro, "they're coming out!"

The dwarf drew back and hid him-

self near, while he watched the door. He was quivering with excitement and one of his hands wound itself about the hilt of a knife.

He saw the three emerge from the cabin and go away; then, watching them out of sight, he sprang to the door and entered.

"I'll see what it says," said he. "If that was one of the old proclamations I want to know it."

Pedro at once sought the cigar box in the chimney niche.

Standing on tiptoes he secured the box, and its contents.

"I've got it and something more," said he. "By my life! Here's a lot of documents! And I'll just take a peep at them!"

Thrusting his find in his bosom, he slipped out, and in five minutes was back in his own shanty, which the light quickly again illumined.

Pedro at once proceeded with his scrutiny of the documents.

"Why, here's the boy's claim papers! That's a queer place to find 'em!" exclaimed the dwarf. "I wonder how they got to Captain Kidd's den? And this? Why, here's a picture and a lock of hair, and—Jehosaphat! Here's the hull layout!"

Pedro's eyes fairly blazed.

"Just as I expected! It's on o' the old proclamations from the San Pablo Valley. It wants Major Christmas. I wonder—"

The little man looked up and started toward the door, the paper in his hand.

He had heard a noise outside and the door stood an inch ajar.

"Who is there?" he called.

The door opened wide and a stranger stepped inside.

Pedro drew back and clutched his knife.

"You can't rob me!" he gritted, and his eyes flashed venomously.

"I don't want to rob you, but, where did you get those documents? Did you rob the boy?"

"No, I robbed the captain!"

"Well, they are mine; not the captain's."

"Yours? Who are you?"

The other one, much taller than the misshapen Pedro, opened his shirt.

"Look!" he cried.

Pedro gazed at the exposed breast, then he threw the papers on the table.

"Juan!" he cried.

The next moment the tall man had the dwarf in his arms and was looking at him in the dim light.

"Juan!" repeated Pedro. "What became of mother?"

"Ask Major Christmas!"

"Ah! I understand. Yes, I'll ask him. I found those papers at Captain Kidd's shanty. How came they there, I wonder?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

Juan put his brother down and for a minute the two, so strangely reunited, looked at one another in silence.

"Come!" said Pedro, suddenly. "Let's make Rome howl!"

"Not just yet, brother! We want first to see the boy claimant get his rights. He must not be wronged and robbed!"

"The boy, Claude? Yes, yes. Where is he?"

"I left him at his shanty when I rode away on his mare to-night; then he had all these papers—that I know."

"But, if they had them in their shanty they must have robbed him, so he may have been in trouble since you left."

"That is so; let us investigate at once!"

Pedro put out the light, and the brothers immediately quitted the cabin.

Juan soon opened the door of Claude's habitation and looked inside.

He saw the plundered couch and the truth flashed across his mind in an instant.

"They've robbed the boy sport!" said he.

"And killed him, too, I suspect. His not being here shows that something has happened to him."

"That is evident. We must try and find out at once."

Juan and Pedro turned up a few minutes later in another part of Gold City and crept toward Captain Kidd's cabin.

It was past midnight now, and the light beyond the window revealed the solitary figure inside.

Captain Kidd had come home again.

"Give me a chance at him!" whispered the dwarf.

Juan pushed his brother back.

"No, not yet, Pedro! Colorado Claude must face Captain Kidd—"

At that moment Jumping Jerry sprang from his chair and hurriedly sought the chimney.

"He will find them gone!" muttered Pedro. "We must play our hand of vengeance now, brother!"

The One-Armed Sport put his hand into the box in the niche and hastily withdrew it, and jerking the box from its place he looked into it, his face telling the silent spectators that it was empty.

For half a second the captain stood in the middle of the room looking like a robbed lion.

"Did the scoundrels come back and rob me?" he hissed. "Do they expect to betray me into the hands of the avengers? Better for you two villains if you had never seen the light of day!"

He threw the box across the room in his anger.

"I'll beat the boy, after all, and I can make terms with them," he went on. "Captain Kidd must not falter now. I can hold Joe and Silas despite their treachery, for I know them. They thought the old proclamation meant me and therefore they sneaked back and took it."

He armed himself and came toward the door, and if Juan had not knocked down the arm of his brother there would have been a dead man at the threshold. As it was he saved the captain's life.

Jerking Pedro around the cabin corner, the brothers watched the boss of Gold City vanish toward another part of the camp.

"We must wait until Claude gets his own for all time before harm comes to this villain, on whose track we both are. I promised to wait until after the trial, which will take place to-morrow. Claude must be there and I have proof that will turn the packed jury against the so-called one-armed sport."

"Heavens! Minutes will be hours!" cried Pedro.

"Even so, but you must curb your spirit, my brother. Remember, we have in our hands the man who embittered our mother's life, and that he cannot escape."

"He shall not! But Claude will never come back to claim his own. Pedro believes that!" the dwarf exclaimed.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SECOND DELIVERANCE.

In the widening light of a new day far from Gold City a horse was careering over a beautiful landscape. His rider lay forward on the neck of the beast.

Ahead rolled a swift river, that leaped

and careered wildly through the lone region.

The rider was Claude, the boy miner, and ever since the parting shots from Jericho Joe and Black Silas he had been carried on and on, helpless and faint, and suffering.

At last the horse stopped and sniffed the cool air, lifting his head and stretching his sleek neck in his eagerness. Then, suddenly, he sent out a shrill whinney.

Claude looked back over the trail and saw approaching another steed and rider.

They were making for him!

Claude watched the new-comer with eagerness and fear.

What if Joe or Silas had trailed him, believing that they had not quite put an end to his existence?

Claude was speedily undeceived, for, all at once, he caught sight of a yellow feather that waved above the rider's head!

"It is the Sioux chief!" exclaimed the boy. "Yellow Feather comes again to the rescue!"

But at that moment his own horse, as if suspicious of the stranger, started forward once more.

Seeing this, the Indian uttered a cry and put spurs to his own steed.

It was now a race between two well-mettled animals, and they galloped away with the speed of racers.

But suddenly the boy's steed took a new spurt and escaped for the time, which only gave Yellow Feather renewed courage.

But the boy Mazeppa's tired horse was no match for that of the Sioux, and ere long the Indian came alongside.

Then came the whoop of victory as the chief leaned forward and caught the horse's mane.

Both steeds soon came to a standstill, and even while the boy was uttering his gratitude Yellow Feather was severing his bonds.

"White boy had hard ride," said the young chief.

"Yes, I fared hard at the hands of the masked enemy."

"Who bound the boy?"

"The two slaves of Captain Kidd."

"The white wolves," hissed the young Indian. "It is Yellow Feather who speaks. He says they shall pay for this!"

Claude's wound was dressed and found to be not severe, but the escape had been a very narrow one.

Yellow Feather led the bridleless steed back, quite docile now, and the pair turned their course toward the gold camp.

"They robbed me, of course," said Claude, as they rode. "The villains took the strong papers from beneath my pillow."

"They steal everything," was the answer. "But wait, boy! The young eagle can tear with his talons!"

"That he can, Yellow Feather!" cried Claude. "The trial is to take place this morning. Whether I am there or not, it will proceed, and everything is in Captain Kidd's hands now—all the evidence he wants."

"Look!" cried the Indian a moment later, as he pointed down the trail to the roofs of the cabins of Gold City, visible from where they were.

Claude turned to the chief. "Will you enter the camp with me?" he asked.

"No."

"You are not afraid, Yellow Feather?"

"Yellow Feather fears nothing! He will let the boy miner go forward and fight out his battles with Captain Kidd."

"Which I gladly do," and Claude held out his hand to his rescuer, who reined in his steed while the boy passed on.

At the foot of the mountain Claude drew rein, for the chief had extemporized a rude bridle out of his lariat.

He was on a line with the main street of the camp and could see groups of men there.

He was still nearly a mile away, and the figures were not distinguishable from that distance.

The youth rode forward, and when near he saw that the commotion had increased. Springing from the saddle, he ran into the camp, and, by keeping the line of shanties between him and the square, he managed to reach the rear of his own cabin unobserved.

The one little window in the rear served him well; he passed through it into the shanty to find it deserted and in the same state in which he had left it.

Claude went to the front window and gazed down the street.

He also pulled the door ajar in hopes of catching the voices of those on the street, and in this he was partially successful.

The trial had begun.

Claude saw the rude bench upon which sat the hard featured jury selected by Granite Gid, and he knew them all.

His cause in the hands of that jury would be worthless, that he very well knew.

He heard the loud voice of Granite Gid as he shouted:

"Hear ye, hear ye! the court of Gold City is now opened and the cause of Claude Kimball will be heard."

"What is the defendant?" cried Granite Gid.

"Let the boy miner come forward and prove his claim to the ground claimed by Captain Kidd, or forever hold his peace!" continued Granite. "Captain Kidd will now be heard."

"Can it be that the head villain will testify?" Claude asked himself.

There was a little commotion at one end of the crowd, and the tall figure of Jumping Jerry came into view.

"He means to carry out his plan in spite of everything. He realizes that it is the fight of his life. He must play his cards with a cool head and a nervy hand. There he goes!"

Claude saw the One-Armed Sport take from his bosom a large piece of parchment-like paper, which he unfolded before the twelve men.

"The map of the mine," said the boy.

Using but one hand with which to manipulate the map, the captain opened it at last, and the document was spread in full view of all.

He ran his fingers over the lines it contained, explaining his cause to the jury and telling them how Claude had jumped a part of his claim.

No one interrupted him.

"Call the next witness!" ordered Granite Gid.

Jericho Joe came forward. He, of course, substantiated his captain's story about the disputed ground, and Black Silas, who followed him, did likewise.

"Birds of a feather!" muttered Claude. "Was there ever such a nest of human vultures hatched out in these hills?"

Suddenly there advanced to the front from a part of the crowd which the keen eye of the solitary spectator in the cabin had not penetrated a man, at sight of whom Claude uttered a cry.

It was Pedro's brother!

"What will he do?" wondered the claimant. "He said he would play his

hand against Captain Kidd. He is one man among a lot of human wolves. What can he do without help?"

The boy sport was about to step forth when he heard the voice of Pedro's brother, the tall Juan.

"Major Christmas never owned the ground he claims!"

Captain Kidd, at mention of the name, gave the speaker a sharp look, and then glanced at his pards, standing shoulder to shoulder a few feet away.

"What is the witness's name?" asked a voice.

"Juan—Juan of San Pablo!" was the answer. "I am here to say that Major Christmas never owned the claim he seeks."

"But, Major Christmas does not claim anything in Gold City."

"That man does!" and the hand of Juan covered Captain Kidd. "He says he owns the ground covered by Claude's claim. He is Major Christmas of another region. Ask him!"

Captain Kidd's hand went toward his hip, but Jericho Joe checked it.

"Wait!" whispered the pard. "Time enough yet for that. I've fixed it with the tall man. He is covered by half a dozen revolvers, and can't escape us."

The One-Armed Sport looked at Juan with flashing eyes.

"Let him prove his story!" he cried. "Let the liar from San Pablo convince the jury of Gold City, if he can!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DUEL IN THE DARK.

Colorado Claude was under deep excitement; he threw wide the door, but an invisible hand, as it were, grasped his arm and kept him from quitting the cabin.

"Let the man from San Pablo speak his piece against me," cried the One-Armed Sport. "I am here!" fiercely and threateningly spoken.

Claude could wait no more, and was in the street.

"My time has come," he said. "I will bring these villains to judgment and stand by Juan."

Forward he sprang, bursting through the throng, and stood before the jury.

"The boy! the boy!" shouted fifty men.

Claude and Juan exchanged glances, and the man from San Pablo seemed to read the boy's thoughts, for he stepped to his side, and at the same time Jericho Joe and Black Silas stepped closer to Captain Kidd.

"Will the boy miner of Gold City talk?" asked Granite Gid.

"That's what I'm here for," said he, undauntedly.

"Let him tell his story."

"Wait. Wait till I have told mine," and Juan gently pulled Claude back. "Wait until Juan of San Pablo has spoken in full. He knows Captain Kidd, so-called, and that man knows Juan."

That moment some one shouted for all to look down the main street, and those who looked saw the dwarf of Gold City, little Pedro, with the remnants of ropes clinging to his figure.

"He's gnawed his bonds off," said Juan to Claude. "I left him bound in his shanty, to prevent him from reaching this spot, but he is free."

Yes, free he was, and now furious for vengeance.

Juan advanced, with the intention of checking his brother, but Pedro, with the skill of a monkey, avoided his hands, and the next minute faced the crowd.

"Pedro will strike now!" he cried, with a fiendish glare in his eyes.

The One-Armed Sport glared back at the little man, his hand on his weapon.

Juan now caught his brother, and held him back with one hand, while he addressed the crowd.

He talked rapidly, and told the story of Captain Kidd's life in the San Pablo Valley, and how he (Juan) had hunted him for years.

The crowd listened spellbound, and the jury seemed to hang on every word as it fell from the speaker's lips.

At last Juan stopped and looked at Claude.

"What is the verdict of the jury?" demanded Granite Gid. "Who owns the ground the boy miner claims?"

The dark-faced twelve arose and stood side by side.

They put their heads together in conference, and at last one of their number faced the people.

"The verdict is in favor of the defendant," he announced.

The hush was broken.

The first sound was an execration from Captain Kidd; the next a cry from Pedro.

"Now," cried Juan; "the man from old San Pablo shall give Juan satisfaction. Let him unwrap his right hand, and he will then have two good ones for the battle."

"It shall be done!"

The One-Armed Sport tore at the bandages at his right wrist, and jerked them off, casting them at his feet, as he displayed to the gaze of the men of Gold City the hand which they now saw for the first time.

"Juan is ready to fight any way Major Christmas selects," the man from San Pablo announced. "Thrice-accused villain that he is, I yet will give him the chance; it is his life or mine!"

Captain Kidd leaned toward the dark-faced sport, and asked, malignancy stamped on every feature of his evil face:

"How does the dark shanty suit him?"

"Very well."

"Then the dark cabin it shall be," and the captain looked around upon the crowd. "We have selected the manner of fighting. We will enter a darkened shanty and fight there to the death."

The crowd set up a little cheer, which was quickly suppressed, and all saw Captain Kidd walking toward his own cabin.

Then the little figure shot from Juan's grasp and darted toward the Boss of Gold City.

A warning cry warned the captain of his danger, but Jericho Joe seized the dwarf and hurled him across the square.

The crowd surged toward Captain Kidd's shanty, and blankets speedily made it dark.

Juan stood near the door, cool and collected.

The man from San Pablo was the ideal vengeance hunter, and his glances betrayed no fear.

"It is ready," said the One-Armed Sport, stepping up to his enemy. "It shall be knives in the dark, eh?"

"Just as you elect!" was the answer, and the Boss turned to the door again.

"Shut the door when we enter," he commanded those before him. "Let it remain closed until one of us knocks or calls out."

"It shall be done," said Granite Gid.

Juan and the big ruffian entered the shanty and the door was shut.

Pedro sprang to the shanty and glued his ear to the largest crack in the logs. His eyes blazed like carbuncles, and his yellowish skin took on a darker hue. His long hands trembled, and he did not seem to breathe while he waited for some

sound from the shanty that would tell him the result of that terrible duel in the dark.

The crowd left him there, and, drawing off a few yards, all watched the cabin with most intense interest and solicitude.

Not long did they wait, for ere five minutes had passed a voice came from within.

"The door of this shanty is not to be opened until midnight!" was what was heard.

Granite Gid repeated the words, and the crowd looked at one another, but said nothing.

By and by Pedro, the dwarf, left the door of the cabin and crept away to his own little den.

Claude and Myrtle waited for the signal of the opening of the cabin's door, in Myrtle's home, and saw the long shadows creep down the street, silent and forboding.

In the mountains the night birds began their shrill calls and the coyotes stole forth on their nocturnal hunts.

"I once heard," remarked Myrtle, "that the cabin of Captain Kidd hid the door of a secret mine."

"It may be true. It was the captain's voice which said that the cabin door should not be opened before midnight. That may conceal some deep game of the man vulture."

Side by side Claude and Myrtle watched the stars, and every now and then the boy stole forth, to find the cabin as silent as the heavens themselves.

At last the fated hour struck.

The crowd had surged back to the cabin, and Pedro, with his knife, was first and foremost.

Granite Gid, watch in his palm, stood beside the door, waiting until the hands denoted twelve o'clock, and the moment he nodded to the crowd Pedro sprang up with a shrill cry.

Some one tried the latch, but the door did not yield!

"Ho! thar!" called out Granite Gid. It is twelve o'clock."

No answer from within.

Pedro caught the window sill and drew his lithe body up.

"Push the dwarf inside!" was shouted and it was no sooner suggested than done.

Strong hands thrust the little man through the window into the room, for him to open the door.

A cry from Pedro was heard, and the faces at the window were revealed by the blaze of a match in his hand.

"They're here!" cried the dwarf, opening the door.

Yes, they were there; but—

The career of Captain Kidd, alias Major Christmas, the sport with the mock arm, was at an end, for dead in the light of the dwarf's match he lay.

And not far off, against the logs, stood the tall figure of Juan.

Pedro sprang forward.

"Juan! God be thanked!" was his fervent cry.

But, he suddenly fell back and dropped his light.

Juan did not move, and some one thrust his match forward until it nearly touched Juan's swarthy cheek.

They carried the duellists out into the moonlight and laid them side by side on the sward.

Then a cry for Jericho Joe and Black Silas rose, and the crowd rushed toward the shanty occupied by these detestable minions of the dead impostor.

Of course the two blackbirds had taken

flight, but this did not check the men of Gold City.

The next morning, in the heart of the mountain, two bodies were seen swinging in a rocky pass, and overhead silently floated a troop of vultures.

The Boss of Gold City and his two tools would never again try to wrest from the boy miner that which belonged to him, nor would Captain Kidd wear a bandaged arm in sight of all.

Yellow Feather, who had at one time served two masters, rode past the swinging bodies.

"Ugh! Heap right!" and he passed on his way.

In course of time, Gold City had its first wedding, when Claude led the much-beloved Myrtle to the altar. The yellow feather of the Indian's head-dress was conspicuous in the assembled audience.

Colorado Claude's claim, under his energetic enterprise, developed into the great Kimball Mine; and to-day the once Boy Claimant is a magnate among the men of the great silver State.

THE END.

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